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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Delhi chokes as air quality drops to 'severe' level

New Delhi, 14 Dec

Delhi's air quality plunged into the 'severe' category on Sunday, with an AQI of 459, as a dense smog shrouded the city, leaving residents struggling to breathe, the Central Pollution Control Board reported. AQI readings classify 401–500 as 'severe', while 301–400 is 'very poor'. The minimum temperature settled at 8.2°C, slightly below seasonal norms, with a maximum of 24°C. Relative humidity stood at 100 per cent at 8.30am, the IMD said. The Delhi Directorate of Education ordered hybrid classes for students up to Classes IX and XI. The CAQM activated Stage-IV GRAP measures.—PTI

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Messi to meet Modi, CJI, Army Chief on Monday

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Argentine football icon Lionel Messi will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Chief Justice of India and the Army chief during his Delhi leg on Monday, even as fallout continued from chaos at his Kolkata event.

Messi arrives at 10.45 am, attends a brief hotel interaction, then spends 20 minutes with Modi before visiting NCP MP Praful Patel's residence to meet CJI Justice Surya Kant and Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi. He later goes to Ferozshah Kotla Stadium, a children's clinic and interactions with Indian cricketers. Meanwhile, a Kolkata court remanded organiser Satadru Datta to 14-day police custody. *—Agencies*

>>>More on Page 4

Ruskin Bond hospitalised due to leg issue

DEHRADUN, 14 DEC

Acclaimed author Ruskin Bond has been admitted to a hospital in Dehradun due to a leg problem, as reported by a close friend. Noted publisher Upendra Arora, who visited Bond, stated that the 91-year-old writer was struggling to walk properly and was consequently admitted to a private facility on Saturday. Arora mentioned that Bond is currently undergoing physiotherapy under medical supervision and is expected to be discharged in two to three days, assuring that, "There is nothing serious." Living in the Landour area of Mussoorie, Bond is a prolific writer with over 500 short stories, essays, and novels to his credit. *—PTI*

Many hurt in fog triggered vehicle pile-up in Haryana

ROHTAK, 14 DEC

Around 35 to 40 vehicles, including trucks and buses, were involved in a massive chain collision on a highway in Haryana's Rohtak district on Sunday morning due to dense fog. Many drivers and passengers were injured, and vehicles were damaged in the pile-up. The worst crash was reported from Meham, where a truck and a car collided at an intersection, triggering a pile-up involving dozens of vehicles, most of them trucks. Two other major accidents were reported from Haryana on fog-hit highways, including in Hisar and Rewari. In Hisar, a chain collision was reported at Dhiktana Moda on NH 52 at around 8am after a Haryana Roadways bus from Kaithal rammed into a dumper truck. *—PTI*

Cong takes out 'Vote chor, gaddi chhod' rally in Delhi

Rahul vows to remove BJP-RSS, Kharge calls them traitors

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Congress took out a massive 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally at New Delhi's Ramlila Maidan on Sunday, with senior party leaders launching scathing attacks on the BJP and the Election Commission (EC).

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said indulging in "vote chori" are "gaddars" (traitors) and need to be removed from power to save voting rights and the Constitution.

He said the ideology of Mohan Bhagwat, MS Golwalkar and Manusmriti will destroy the country.

"The BJP-RSS people are engaged in efforts to finish off the Constitution. In the name of Hindutva, these people want to enslave the poor again. But we must remember that the Congress got Independence for the country, Modi-Shah were not even born at that time," Kharge said, addressing thousands of party workers and demonstrators. "What will the poor do if they take away voting rights?"

"These gaddars will have to be removed. Will you remove them?" Kharge asked the gathering.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, party President Mallikarjun Kharge and MP Sonia Gandhi during the 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally, at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

> **Look at Narendra Modi's face, and you'll realise that his confidence has run out. They know that their 'vote theft' has been caught. You all must have seen that Amit Shah's hand was trembling in the (Parliament) House**
>
> Rahul Gandhi, Congress leader

Similarly, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said his party stood with 'satya' (truth) and vowed to remove the "Narendra Modi-RSS government" from power. He said the BJP stood for 'asatya'

He said that truth was in the DNA of the Congress, while the BJP-RSS' DNA rife with "vote chori".

The party had collected around six crore signatures against alleged vote theft from every corner of the country, and will be presenting the same to the President of India, Rahul said.

"(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi brought a new law to give immunity to EC... We are telling you clearly that this law is to protect you and we will change this law retroactively," Rahul said.

Similarly, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra challenged the BJP to win a fair election on the ballot paper.

She said the country will never forget the three names -- Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi -- as no matter what efforts are made to protect them, one day they will have to answer for "conspiring and attempting to take away" voting rights of the people. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3

Bihar's Nitin Nabin appointed BJP Nat'l Working Prez

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Bihar Minister Nitin Nabin has been appointed as the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) National Working President, a move that likely positions him as the successor to current party chief JP Nadda. The 45-year-old Nabin is the son of late Nabin Kishore Prasad Sinha, a respected BJP leader and former MLA.

Having served as a five-time MLA and minister in the Bihar Government, Nabin has built a reputation for effective organisational leadership, notably during his tenure as the party in-charge of Chhattisgarh. His appointment by the BJP parliamentary board comes as incumbent president JP Nadda, who has served since January 2020, prepares to step down.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Nabin, praising him as a "hardworking Karyakarta" and expressing confidence in his energy and dedication to strengthen the party. "He is known for his humble nature and grounded style of working," added Modi.

Nadda also extended his congratulations, stating, "I am fully confident that under the guidance of the esteemed Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji and your leadership, the organisation will reach new heights." Nabin, who has extensive experience with Yuva Morcha, embodies the party's focus on capable leadership and future aspirations. *—PTI*

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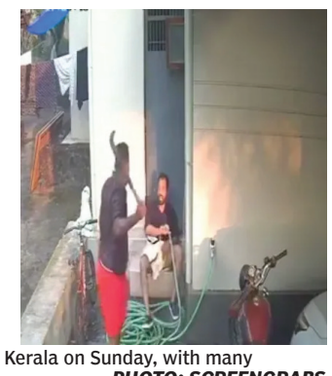
Pankaj Chaudhary becomes new UP BJP Chief

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary has been appointed the new president of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit. Chaudhary, who was the sole candidate, filed his nomination on Saturday. Notably present at the announcement were Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak. ***>>>More on Page 3***



Violence broke out in several parts of Kerala on Sunday, with many involving alleged CPI (M) workers *PHOTO: SCREENGRABS*

VIOLENCE ERUPTS ACROSS KERALA AFTER CIVIC POLL RESULTS

KOZHIKODE, 14 DEC

Violence erupted across Kerala, particularly in the northern districts, after the announcement of local body election results, police said.

In Eramala in Kozhikode district, tension prevailed throughout the night after the Indira Gandhi Bhavan, a Congress office, was allegedly attacked by CPI (M) workers.

An FIR registered at the Edachery police station says that around 200 people marched towards the Congress office carrying weapons and vandalised the building.

A statue of former prime minister Indira Gandhi was also damaged in the attack, police said.

In Sultan Bathery police registered a case after a car carrying a UDF activist and his family was allegedly attacked by around 40 CPI (M) workers..

In Panoor in Kannur district, houses of many Muslim League activists were allegedly attacked by CPI (M) workers. Vehicles parked at the houses were also damaged.

Panoor police said the violence broke out after a UDF victory rally was allegedly stopped by CPI (M) workers armed with swords. *— PTI*

>>>More on Pages 3, 5

B'DESH SUMMONS INDIAN ENVOY OVER HASINA'S REMARKS

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

India stated on Sunday that it has never permitted its territory to be used for activities harmful to Bangladesh's interests, after Bangladesh's foreign ministry summoned India's envoy over former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's "incendiary" statements from Indian soil and raised concerns about the activities of some Awami League members while staying in India.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that India has consistently reiterated its position in favour of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections in Bangladesh in a peaceful atmosphere.

"We expect that the interim government of Bangladesh will take all necessary measures for ensuring internal law and order," it said.

Last month, Hasina was sentenced to death by a special tribunal in Dhaka for "crimes against humanity" over her government's crackdown on student-led protests. She has been living in India since fleeing Bangladesh in August 2024. *—PTI*

Gunmen kill 11 at Australia beach on Jewish holiday

SYDNEY, 14 DEC

Two gunmen shot dead at least 11 people on Sunday at a Jewish event being held at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Australian authorities said. They declared it it a terrorist attack. One gunman was fatally shot by police, and the second was arrested.

The suspect was in critical condition, authorities said. A massive emergency response was underway at the time of publishing, with injured people loaded into ambulances.

At least 29 people were confirmed wounded, said Mal Lanyon, the police commissioner for New South Wales state, where Sydney is located. Two of those hurt were police officers.

Hundreds had gathered for an event at Bondi Beach called Chanukah by the Sea, which was celebrating the start of the Hanukkah Jewish festival.

Police said their operation was "ongoing" and that a "number of suspicious items located in the vicinity" were being examined by specialist officers, including an improvised explosive device found in one of the suspect's cars. Emergency services were called to Campbell Parade about 6.45pm, responding to reports of shots being fired.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the attack, stating, "On behalf of the people of India, I extend my sincere condolences to the families who lost their loved ones. We stand in solidarity with Australia". *—PTI*

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Emergency workers transport a person on a stretcher after a reported shooting at Bondi Beach in Sydney, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

- Two gunmen opened fire on a crowd of hundreds of people in Bondi Beach. The people were celebrating the start of Hanukkah, a Jewish festival

NOTED EDUCATIONIST

Cong leader & Lingayat stalwart Shamanuru dies at 95

BENGLAURU, 14 DEC

PHOTO: X@DVGSHAMANURS

16 JUNE, 1931- 14 DEC, 2025

Veteran Congress leader Shamanuru Shivashankarappa passed away at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Sunday due to age-related ailments, official sources said.

He was 95 and represented the Davanagere South Assembly constituency. He had been undergoing treatment for some time.

Shivashankarappa is survived by three sons, including S S Mallikarjun, Karnataka Minister for Mines and Geology and Horticulture, and four daughters.

His daughter-in-law, Prabha Mallikarjun, is the Member of Parliament from Davanagere.

A former minister, Shivashankarappa, served as treasurer of the KPCC for several decades and was the president of the All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha, the apex body of the influential Veerashaiva-Lingayat community. He was also a noted educationist who established several educational institutions and was an industrialist.

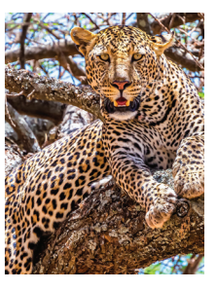
Condolences poured in from across party lines. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, former chief ministers HD Kumaraswamy and Basavaraj Bommai expressed their grief.

"In his long public life, he stayed away from controversies and allegations, and as a dedicated leader who utilised the power he received solely for public welfare, his departure has impoverished society," Siddaramaiah said. "His efforts in transforming Davanagere district into a model district will make him immortal in the hearts of the people." *—Agencies*

Nauradehi to be MP's third cheetah reserve

BHOPAL, 14 DEC

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve at Nauradehi in Sagar district will become the State's third cheetah habitat before the next monsoon, following the successful translocation of the big cats from Africa.



The State cabinet has given in-principle approval to develop the reserve as a cheetah home. "We are building three large cheetah reserves. Nauradehi has just been approved and an enclosure is being prepared. This will become a new home for cheetahs before next monsoon," Yadav told PTI, marking two years in office.

The first cheetah habitat was opened at Kuno National Park in Sheopur in September 2022, while the second came up at Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary in Mandsaur in April this year. Kuno currently has 28 cheetahs, while Gandhi Sagar hosts two. Eight more cheetahs are expected from Botswana in January 2026.

Claiming global success, Yadav said Madhya Pradesh was the only place where cheetah rehabilitation had worked. He also addressed rising tiger deaths, saying, "When there are too many tigers, such incidents naturally occur," while stressing efforts to minimise losses and manage migration. The CM said the government was also translocating other species, including rhinoceroses from Assam and king cobras, and was developing snake parks, rescue centres, zoos and tourism facilities. *—PTI*

MAY GET NEW PM AFTER NEW EPSTEIN FILES: CHAVAN

PUNE, 14 DEC

Citing the release of the Jeffrey Epstein files in the United States on 19 December, senior Congress leader Prithviraj Chavan claimed that India could soon have a "new prime minister," and that the new PM could be from Maharashtra.

After a recent social media post in which he hinted that a "Marathi manoos" could become India's PM within a month, Chavan, speaking at Pimpri Chinchwad here on Saturday, said many had contacted him seeking clarification about the remark.

He said his comments were linked to 19 December, the date on which the US Congress is expected to release the Epstein files.

" Some names are already doing the rounds on social media," he said. "There is a possibility that it might affect our country's politics." *— PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Murmu to visit Mysuru, Malavalli on 16 and 17 Dec

MYSURU, 14 DEC

President of India Droupadi Murmu is set to visit Mysuru and Malavalli on 16 and 17 December for the 1066th Jayanti celebrations of Sri Shivarathreeshwara Shivayogi Swamiji. She will arrive at Mysore Airport on 16 December at 6pm and will stay overnight at the Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel. On 17 December, she will travel to Malavalli by ar chopper to open the Jayanti celebrations at 11 am, before returning to Delhi at 12.40pm. ***—Salar News***

Nursing student dies by suicide in in Chamarajanagar

MYSURU, 14 DEC

A 21-year-old nursing student died by suicide at her residence in Halehampapura near Kollegal, Chamarajanagar, on Sunday. The deceased, identified as Priyanka, was a final-year student. According to police, she was reportedly unable to bear a persistent stomachache and took the extreme step by hanging herself at her residence. Officers from Kollegal Town Police Station rushed to the spot upon receiving information and have filed a case under relevant sections of Bhartiya Nyay Sanhita. A probe into the incident is underway. Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416 or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for necessary support. ***—Salar News***

Govt to probe claims of cancer-causing agents in egg brand

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

The Karnataka government will verify claims circulating on social media that a particular brand of eggs contains 'genotoxic substances' that may cause cancer before taking any further action, Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said on Sunday.

Assuring that the matter would be taken seriously, Rao urged people not to panic or get confused and said there was no need to stop consuming eggs at this stage.

Social media posts have claimed that laboratory tests conducted on a batch of eggs from a particular brand detected traces of nitrofuran and nitroimidazole, substances reportedly banned for use in poultry farming.

"First of all, we need to ascertain the background—who conducted the tests and whether they were carried out scientifically.

I will speak to the Food Safety and Drug Commissioner to gather details. If there is any truth to the claims, especially since they are being linked to cancer, we will definitely take appropriate action," Rao told reporters here.

He said that based on the information gathered, the government would decide whether further testing is required.

"At present, there is no need for people to worry or be confused. It is better to arrive at a conclusion after verifying the facts," he added.Responding to a query on whether such substances could have been used in poultry farming to prevent bacterial infections or increase egg production, Rao said it would be inappropriate to comment without verified information.

"Whether such practices are being followed, who is doing it, which company is involved, and whether others are also doing it—all these aspects need to be examined," he said. *—PTI*

DKS, CM join 'vote theft' rally in Delhi

Rally is to protect right to vote: DKS; no comment on High Command meet

NEW DELHI/ BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar asserted that the Congress party's rally against alleged 'vote chori' (vote theft) in New Delhi is to protect every citizen's right to vote, while CM Siddaramaiah said fascism does not begin with guns on the streets, it begins with the quiet theft of institutions, the slow manipulation of systems, and finally, the theft of elections.

Accusing the BJP government at the Centre of restricting vehicles with Congress workers from entering Delhi to participate in the party's mega rally, Shivakumar, who is also the Karnataka Congress President, said that about 3,500-4,000 party leaders and workers came from the State to participate in the rally.

Congress held a mega rally at Ramlila Maidan in Delhi on Sunday, against the alleged "vote chori" (vote theft). "The BJP and the Central government are stopping vehicles (with Congress workers) from coming to Delhi, they are apparently not allowing vehicles to enter the city," Shivakumar alleged.

Reacting to a question on Union Home Minister Amit Shah reportedly terming Congress party's rally as an "act of frustration" due to electoral losses, the Bengaluru Minister said, "Let them say anything for their enjoyment. We, the Congressmen, won't think about electoral victories and losses."

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah said that in Mahadevapura, evidence was presented showing thousands of duplicate or fraudulent voter entries and discrepancies in the electoral rolls that correlated with the BJP's narrow edge in the constituency. In Aland, thousands of attempted deletions of legitimate voters were recorded ahead of the 2023 Assembly polls prompting an FIR and SIT probe, Siddaramaiah noted. Vote chori is not just about numbers, it is about dignity he said.

"When a young woman waits in line for hours to vote and later finds that her vote has been deleted, she feels cheated. When an elderly farmer wakes up at dawn to cast his vote but finds his name missing, he feels betrayed," he added. Shivakumar meanwhile did not comment on meeting the High Command.

—Salar News with Agencies

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu (2nd right), along with Karnataka Deputy CM DK Shivakumar (right), Congress leader Mukul Wasnik, and others at party headquarters in New Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

EC WON RECENT STATE POLLS: CONG MLC SALEEM

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

State Congress MLC Saleem Ahmed, who attended the party's 'vote chori' rally said that despite BJP victories in Maharashtra, Bihar, and Haryana, the results did not reflect the people's mandate but institutional bias.

"BJP won elections in Maharashtra, Bihar, and Haryana, but it is not the people's victory.

It is the Election Commission's and BJP's victory," he said.

Minister NS Boseraju said legislators and party workers from the State had gathered in Delhi to participate in the rally.

"MLAs, MLCs, and party workers have come here to participate in the rally on Vote Chori," Boseraju added. *—ANI*

Vote chori exposed: Priyank on Aland chargesheet

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

State Rural Development Minister Priyank Kharge has claimed that the state's Special Investigation Team (SIT) has uncovered substantial evidence of vote fraud in the Aland Assembly constituency, accusing the former BJP MLA Subhash Guttedar and his son of orchestrating the scheme. Kharge alleged that the BJP deleted 5,994 voters using forged logins, asserting, "The BJP's #VoteChori factory in Aland is fully exposed... The SIT has filed a chargesheet despite the Election Commission's roadblocks."

Kharge also slammed Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his language in the Parliament during the debate on electoral reforms, stating it reflected a deeper mindset within the ruling party. "Your language reveals your mindset," he remarked. *—ANI*

HEALTH IN FOCUS

A Greater Bengaluru Authority worker carries out fumigation at Cubbon Park in Bengaluru on Sunday as mosquito and insects activity increased due to prevailing weather conditions ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Karnataka braces for 'cold wave' as temperatures plummet

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Cold conditions are intensifying across Karnataka, with the Meteorological Department warning of a cold wave over the next two days. Minimum temperatures are expected to drop sharply, with some regions experiencing lows around 9°C.

An Orange Alert has been issued for Bidar, Kalaburagi, Raichur, Yadgir, and Vijayapura districts, while a Yellow Alert is in place for Hassan, Chikkaballapur, Davanagere, Shivamogga, Haveri, Ballari, Gadag, Koppal, Bagalkote, Dharwad, and Belagavi.

In these areas, minimum temperatures may range between 9°C and 12°C.

The cold wave is primarily attributed to dry winds flowing into the state from North India ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

The City itself is likely to record temperatures between 12°C and 14°C. The cold wave is primarily attributed to dry winds flowing into the state from North India.

According to the Meteorological Department, "the cold wave is likely to continue for the next five days," with Bidar recording the lowest at 7°C.

The IMD has also stated that severe cold winds are expected in the northern interior of the state over the next 48 hours, urging residents in Bidar, Bagalkot, Vijayapura, and Kalaburagi to exercise caution. Conditions are expected to ease slightly after 17 December. *—Agencies*

Husband attempts to burn wife, kin

BELAGAVI, 14 DEC

A man attempted to kill his wife and five of her family members by pouring petrol and setting them afire at Telsang village in the Athani taluk of Belagavi district.

The incident occurred on 10 December after the woman, unable to bear harassment at her matrimonial home, had gone to her parental house without her husband's consent. Enraged by this, the accused, Bhima Bhosale, a resident of Yelihadalagi village in Athani taluk, went to his wife's parental home and attacked those present.

Police said Bhima accused his wife's family of taking her away despite his objections.

All six victims suffered serious burns and are undergoing treatment at the Athani Government Hospital.

Belagavi SP Bhimashankar Guleed confirmed the incident. The injured are Sanju Salunke, Shankar Salunke, Krishna Salunke, Ankush Padatara and Manohar Padatara. *—Salar News*

Is Mysuru losing its heritage? Belawadi, Yaduveer discuss

MYSURU, 14 DEC

BJP MP Yaduveer Krishnadutta Chamaraja Wadiyar on Sunday urged the State government to opt for a sustainable developmental model for Mysuru's expansion and urged to consider the city's heritage and cultural significance.

Speaking at a seminar on the city's future 'Greater Mysore or Greater Vision – What Does Mysore Truly Need?' held at Bahadoor Institute of Management Services, University of Mysore, he said that mere expansion of boundaries will not serve any purpose.Renowned actor and public intellectual Prakash Belawadi cautioned against blindly replicating Bengaluru's unplanned infrastructure model. He urged citizens to come together on a common platform to protect Mysore's identity, rights, and long-term interests.

Hunsur MLA GD Harish Gowda spoke on the intricacies of urban planning and governance, highlighting that a coordinated approach among multiple government agencies is essential to translate the vision of Greater Mysore into reality.

Former chief secretary of state government Ravindra, countered, sharing valuable insights from his experience with Smart City projects and heritage conservation in Bengaluru, presenting practical examples and strategies that could be adapted effectively for Mysuru.

In his opening remarks, Dr Shushrutha Gowda, Neurologist and Founding Secretary of VR Trust, addressed the broader implications of the Greater Mysore concept.

He emphasised that Mysuru's growth must remain firmly rooted in its unique legacy and values. *—Salar News*

WINS SIDDARAMAIAH'S PRAISE

Ex-MLA, a doc, saves US flyer mid-air

BENGALURU, 14 DEC

Former Congress Khanapur MLA Dr Anjali Nimbalkar saved the life of an American woman who suffered a medical emergency mid-air during a Goa–New Delhi flight, officials said on Sunday.

The incident happened when Nimbalkar, the AICC Secretary co-in-charge of Goa, Daman, Dadra Nagar Haveli, was flying to New Delhi to attend the Congress' "Vote Chori" rally at the Ramleela Maidan on Sunday.

Nimbalkar performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and revived the co-passenger, who had complained of uneasiness and shivering, fainted and lost her pulse, they said. Soon after landing in New Delhi, the foreigner was taken to a hospital by ambulance, sources said, adding that Nimbalkar's timely action received praise from passengers and the crew.

Karnataka former Congress MLA, who is also a doctor, saves life of American co-passenger mid air ***PHOTO: PTI***

- The incident happened when Nimbalkar, the AICC Secretary, was flying to New Delhi to attend the "Vote Chori" rally of Congress

Praising Nimbalkar, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, on X said, "Deeply moved to hear about the remarkable presence of mind shown.... What makes this even more noteworthy is that, despite having given up the medical profession, the doctor within her responded without a second thought. This selfless act reflects not just professional expertise, but a profound sense of responsibility towards fellow beings."

Thanking the CM, Nimbalkar replied on X that she had merely done her duty as a doctor. *—PTI*

FIGHT FOR EDUCATION

Members of AIDSO with students and parents protest against the proposal of the alleged closing of the government schools by the State government at Goraguntepalya in Bengaluru on Sunday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

PHOTO: ANI

Police permits Vijay's Erode meeting

ERODE, 14 DEC

Police have granted permission for the public meeting of TVK Chief Vijay, scheduled for 18 December. The party's chief coordinator, KA Sengottaiyan, requested permission from the Police and Revenue department three days prior for the event, set to take place between 11am and 1pm at Vijayamangalam. The meeting venue, a 16-acre plot controlled by a private temple under the HR&CE department, initially required additional approvals. Following a meeting between TVK representatives and temple authorities, the necessary No Objection Certificate (NOC) was sent to the police. Superintendent of Police A Sujatha conducted a site inspection before granting permission, with stipulations for a Rs 50,000 rental payment to the temple and an additional Rs 50,000 as a caution deposit. Sengottaiyan expressed confidence in the support for Vijay. *—PTI*

Kwatra, US lawmakers discuss India-US ties

WASHINGTON, 14 DEC

India's Ambassador to the US, Vinay Mohan Kwatra, met senior Democratic lawmakers on Saturday to discuss cooperation in technology, defence and trade to strengthen bilateral ties. Kwatra discussed shared priorities on emerging developments in artificial intelligence, defence and security cooperation, trade and investment, and people-to-people exchanges with Congressman Ted Lieu, Vice Chair of the House Democrats Caucus. He said he looked forward to continued collaboration on issues of mutual interest. In another meeting on Friday, Kwatra met Congresswoman Yvette Clarke, Chair of the House Black Caucus, calling her a "steadfast supporter of strong India-US relations." *—PTI*

UP tops in digital registration of Waqf properties

LUCKNOW, 14 DEC

Uttar Pradesh has topped the country in the digital registration of Waqf properties on the Centre's 'Ummeed' portal, completing the process for 92,832 properties within the stipulated timeframe, according to the state government. District-wise figures show Lucknow is leading in the registration of Shia Waqf properties with 625 entries, followed by Amroha with 539 and Meerut with 533. The government said awareness drives and administrative support helped ensure timely compliance by most Mutawallis or managers of Waqf properties across districts. Officials said the digital registration initiative is expected to bring greater transparency to the management of Waqf properties, help prevent misuse, and facilitate their protection and development. *—PTI*

Vijay Shah clarifies Ladli Behna scheme remarks

RATLAM/INDORE, 14 DEC

Madhya Pradesh minister Vijay Shah on Sunday said his earlier remarks on linking the aid under the state government's Ladli Behna Yojana to attendance by women beneficiaries at a function to felicitate Chief Minister Mohan Yadav had been "twisted and misrepresented". The remarks followed a meeting where he reportedly said beneficiaries attending the event would receive an extra Rs 250, while others would face pending verification. He clarified his comments, citing an informal discussion focused on ensuring "that only eligible women should receive benefits under the scheme and ineligible beneficiaries should be weeded out." *—PTI*

Cong's rally is to protect 'infiltrators', alleges BJP

BJP says under RaGa, Cong will meet same fate as Mughals

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Supporters hold placards of LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi during the 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally, at Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

Ahead of the Congress' rally over the "vote theft" issue, the BJP on Sunday alleged that the main opposition party was holding the event in its bid to "protect infiltrators" from being removed from the electoral rolls.

The ruling BJP asserted that the Congress will not succeed in its design of misleading people as well as "insulting and defaming" constitutional institutions, because the entire world knows that India's democracy is "very robust".

Ahead of the event, BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra said the Congress was holding the rally even as Union Home Minister Amit Shah "exposed" the opposition through his point-by-point rebuttal to their "fabricated" allegations during a debate on electoral reforms during the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament.

"This shows that you do not have truth in your hand, yet you are trying to create an atmosphere of confusion. The Congress' rally is an exercise to protect 'ghuspaithiyas (infiltrators)'. This is what the Congress is doing," the BJP MP told reporters here.

"The Congress party may try all it wants to mislead the people as well as insult and defame our constitutional institutions. But, the entire world knows that India's democracy is very robust and it cannot be shaken," he added.

The BJP leader accused the Congress of holding the rally to pursue its "appeasement politics" and dared Rahul Gandhi to challenge the Bihar assembly polls if he felt that there was any irregularity.

- BJP asserted that the Congress will not succeed in its design of misleading people as well as "insulting and defaming" constitutional institutions, because the entire world knows that India's democracy is "very robust".

Additionally, the saffron party hit back by likening the Nehru family with that of Babar, and alleged that the Congress will be "buried in history" under Rahul Gandhi's leadership just like the fate of the Mughal empire under its sixth emperor Aurangzeb.

The charges followed after some Congress workers were heard in several videos on social media purportedly chanting "Modi teri kabra khudegi" while heading to the Opposition party's rally. *—PTI*

'BJP PUSHING FALSE NARRATIVE'

BJP's win in Kerala local body polls exaggerated: KC

T'PURAM/NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

AICC General Secretary **KC Venugopal** on Sunday accused the BJP of pushing a 'false narrative' of major gains in Kerala's local body elections, asserting that the party's footprint in the State remained marginal despite high-decibel claims by its leadership.

Speaking in New Delhi, Venugopal said that of Kerala's 1,199 local bodies, the BJP improved its tally in only eight. "The Prime Minister, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari and others claimed Kerala has witnessed a major change. Yes, they won the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, and I am not taking that lightly. But beyond that, they do not have a single seat in the district panchayat there," he said.

Comparing the outcome with the 2020 polls, Venugopal said the BJP lost control of Palakkad and Pandalam municipalities, even as it added two new ones.

Venugopal credited the UDF's surge to public resentment against the Pinarayi Vijayan government, alleging its actions alienated voters and enabled the BJP's victories in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and the Thrissur Lok Sabha seat.

He ruled out power-sharing with the CPI(M) to counter the BJP.

LDF leaders, however, acknowledged setbacks. General Education Minister V Sivankutty cited "political undercurrents" and alleged norm violations by the BJP, while denying leadership failure. *—PTI*

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP state President Pankaj Chaudhary and Union Minister Piyush Goyal during the 'Sangathan Parv' event, in Lucknow, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Pankaj Chaudhary elected as UP BJP Chief

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

- Following the announcement, outgoing state chief Bhupendra Chaudhary handed over the party flag, while Piyush Goyal presented the certificate of election.

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary was on Sunday unanimously elected president of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit, with Union Minister Goyal formally announcing the result at the party headquarters in Lucknow.

Chaudhary, the sole candidate, had filed his nomination on Saturday before former Union minister and state election officer Mahendra Nath Pandey and central observer Vinod Tawde.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and Jal Shakti Minister Swatantra Dev Singh were present. Following the announcement, outgoing state chief Bhupendra Chaudhary handed over the party flag, while Goyal, acting as central election officer, presented the certificate of election.

Announcing the result, Goyal said, "On 14 December, I am very happy to announce that Pankaj Chaudhary has been unanimously elected as the Uttar Pradesh BJP president." He was felicitated by Adityanath and senior leaders amid cheers from party workers, and later sought the Chief Minister's blessings.

A seven-time MP from Maharajganj, Chaudhary was inducted as Union minister of state for finance in the second Modi government. He began his political career as a Gorakhpur municipal councillor between 1989 and 1991, also serving as deputy mayor, and formally joined the BJP in 1990. He belongs to the Kurmi OBC community. *—Agencies*

BJP appoints a Bihari as nat'l Prez for 1st time

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

In a surprising move, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has selected Nitin Nabin as the first leader from Bihar to become its national president. At just 45 years old, Nabin has served five terms as an MLA, winning consecutive elections from the Bankipur constituency, previously Patna West, since being elected in a bypoll in 2006 following his father's death.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi praised Nabin's industriousness and organisational experience, stating, "He is known for his humble nature and grounded style of working. I am confident that his energy and dedication will strengthen our party in the times to come."

BJP president JP Nadda, who has completed his term and was recently granted an extension, described Nabin as "a dynamic leader from the sacred land of knowledge and culture, Bihar," expressing confidence in the party's future under his leadership.

A Kayasth by caste, Nabin currently serves as the Public Works Department Minister in Bihar. He has a track record of winning elections by substantial margins, including a recent victory by over 51,000 votes. Nabin's extensive experience working in the party and serving as a minister positions him as a promising leader for the BJP moving forward. *—PTI*

Prioritise women, SC/ST officers for central posts: Centre to states

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The central government has requested state governments to prioritise the nomination of women officers, as well as those from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), for key central deputation posts. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) issued a directive to chief secretaries, stressing the importance of adequate representation for these groups.

The communique, dated 10 December, stated, "Sufficient names of women and SC and ST officers may be sponsored so that adequate representation can be provided to them." The nominated officers are to be appointed under the Central Staffing Scheme (CSS) and as Chief Vigilance Officers (CVOs) in central public sector enterprises (CPSEs).

CVOs play a vital role in combating corruption within government departments. The DoPT emphasised that the movement of officers from state to central level is crucial for enhancing capabilities and fostering a national perspective in decision-making.

To ensure proper cadre management, the ministry noted the importance of maintaining a healthy Central Deputation Reserve (CDR) for IAS officers, advocating that every eligible officer should have the chance to serve at the Centre at least once in their career.

Furthermore, the communique warned that withdrawal of an officer's name after recommendation could result in a five-year debarment from central deputation, including foreign postings. The nomination process will commence through a dedicated portal starting 1 January, 2026. *—PTI*

Not the first time Ajit Pawar missed memorial visit: NCP

MUMBAI, 14 DEC

Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis pays tribute to RSS founder Keshav Baliram Hedgewar, at Smruti Mandir, in Nagpur, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar did not attend the memorial for RSS founder KB Hedgewar in Nagpur on Sunday, prompting the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) to reiterate its commitment to state development. NCP spokesperson Anand Paranjpe remarked, "We stick to our principles and our focus is development of the state", noting that this was not the first time Pawar missed the memorial visit.

While Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy CM Eknath Shinde, and members of the ruling BJP and Shiv Sena paid their respects, Pawar and other NCP leaders were absent from the event. The winter session of the Maharashtra legislature is currently taking place in Nagpur, with local BJP MLAs traditionally visiting the Smruti Mandir to honour Hedgewar and his successor, MS Golwalkar.

Opposition Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant accused the NCP of adhering to RSS ideology in cabinet meetings, contending that their collaboration suggests an acceptance of RSS principles. He labelled the RSS as undermining democracy, saying, "Despite being in existence for over 100 years, the RSS has failed to clearly define what Hindutva stands for", and urged them to clarify their stance. *—PTI*

DALIT OFFICIAL BEATING CASE

UP BJP worker accused of assault gets grand welcome

BALLIA, 14 DEC

Munna Bahadur Singh being welcomed by several people after his return from jail *PHOTO: ANI*

A local BJP worker was accorded a grand welcome upon his release on bail from Mau district jail in a case registered against him for allegedly beating up a Dalit official of the power department. A video of the incident is being widely circulated on social media.

The clip purportedly showed Munna Bahadur Singh being welcomed by several people as his convoy returned to his home district following his release from jail on Friday on an order of the Allahabad High Court.

Singh was arrested after he allegedly beat up the Superintending Engineer of the state power corporation, Lal Ji Singh, a Dalit, with shoes inside his office at the district headquarters on 23 August. Following the incident, police registered a case and sent the BJP worker to jail.

Even before his release, some BJP leaders publicly extended support to Singh.

Former BJP MLA Ram Iqbal Singh, in a Facebook post, claimed that Singh had gone to the power department to raise issues related to electricity supply affecting dozens of villages and was "falsely implicated" in the case. He welcomed the High Court's decision granting him bail.

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Transport (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Singh's younger brother, Dharmendra Singh, also posted on Facebook that he was present on the occasion of Munna Bahadur Singh's release from Mau jail. He said BJP workers warmly welcomed Singh from Mau to Ballia and extended best wishes for his future. *—PTI*

Murmu rejects mercy plea for 2-yr-old's rapist

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

- The Supreme Court upheld Ghumare's death sentence on 3 October 2019, concluding that he had "no control over his carnal desires" and had "surpassed all natural, social, and legal limits just to satiate his sexual hunger."

President **Droupadi Murmu** has refused the mercy petition of Ravi Ashok Ghumare, convicted for the kidnapping, rape, and murder of a two-year-old girl in Maharashtra in 2012, officials announced on Sunday.

This marks the third mercy plea rejection by the President since taking office on 25 July 2022.

The Supreme Court upheld Ghumare's death sentence on 3 October 2019, concluding that he had "no control over his carnal desires" and had "surpassed all natural, social, and legal limits just to satiate his sexual hunger."

In their majority judgement, a three-judge bench, including Justice Surya Kant (now the Chief Justice of India), stated that Ghumare had "ruthlessly finished" a life that was yet to bloom.

Justice Kant wrote, "The appellant, instead of showing fatherly love, affection and protection to the child, made her the victim of lust. It's a case where trust has been betrayed, and social values are impaired." The horrific incident occurred on 6 March 2012, in Indiranagar, Jalna, where Ghumare lured the child with chocolate before committing the crime.

Ghumare was sentenced to death by a trial court on 16 September 2015, a decision that the Bombay High Court upheld in January 2016. *—PTI*

Jaishankar meets global counterparts at UAE summit

DUBAI, 14 DEC

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday held a series of meetings with European, British and Egyptian counterparts on the sidelines of a high-level international summit in the UAE, amid discussions on global geopolitical and security challenges.

Jaishankar said he was "glad to be" with Luxembourg's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel, Poland's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski, and Latvia's Foreign Minister Baiba Braze.

The meetings took place during the Sir Bani Yas Forum 2025, a three-day gathering of global leaders, policymakers and experts in Abu Dhabi that concluded on Sunday.

The EAM also met UK Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy.

The annual Sir Bani Yas Forum serves as a platform for dialogue on regional stability, international security and emerging global challenges, bringing together senior ministers worldwide. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indian Coast Guard leads evacuation op in Lakshadweep

KOCHI, 14 DEC

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) successfully facilitated an urgent medical evacuation of a 75-year-old patient diagnosed with acute subacute subdural hematoma, who was on oxygen support. The operation commenced late Saturday night, transporting the patient from Agatti in Lakshadweep to Kochi. The request activated the ICG's distress response, leading to a Dornier aircraft being dispatched. Landing at Agatti at 11.20pm, the patient, medical team, and spouse were swiftly boarded. The aircraft took off within 25 minutes, arriving in Kochi at 1.10am. The patient was transferred to Amrita Hospital for advanced care. "The operation was executed within three hours under challenging conditions," the Coast Guard stated. *—PTI*

Wildfire rages in Nagaland' Dzukou Valley for 3rd day

KOHIMA, 14 DEC

A wildfire has ravaged the Dzukou Valley in Nagaland for a third consecutive day, with aerial firefighting operations set to begin today. The blaze, ignited by four local trekkers, initially affected approximately 1.3sqkm of forest but has since spread due to strong winds and difficult terrain. District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) officials confirmed that a helicopter equipped with a 'bambi bucket' from the Indian Air Force will assist. Ground efforts remain limited due to steep slopes and dense vegetation. Authorities warn that the fire poses significant ecological risks, as it threatens unique flora and ecosystems. Public access to the area has been restricted until containment is achieved. *—PTI*

Court acquits last accused in 1991 ashram attack

PALGHAR, 14 DEC

A local court in Maharashtra acquitted the sole remaining accused in the 1991 Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram attack case. The attack, which occurred on 14 August, involved a 150-strong mob assaulting the Ashram's manager Mahadeo Jairam Joshi, resulting in significant injuries and property damage. Additional Sessions Judge AV Chaudhari Inamdar found that the prosecution had failed to provide reliable evidence linking accused Satva Ladkya Bhagat to the crime. The main witness could not identify the mob members, and other testimonies did not correlate with the charges. The original case against 32 accused led to previous acquittals, and three co-accused's cases abated due to death. Judge Inamdar cited a lack of credible evidence in the acquittal. *—PTI*

NHRC summons 32 states over proxy rule case

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued "conditional summons" to top officials of 32 states and UTs for failing to respond to a notice on 'proxy governance'—where male relatives allegedly wield power on behalf of elected women representatives. The action follows a complaint alleging this 'Sarpanch Pati' practice undermines constitutional rights and women's reservation. Officials must appear before the commission on 30 December with action reports, though compliance by December 22 waives personal appearance. NHRC member Priyank Kanoongo stated, "any form of proxy representation... is contrary to the spirit of the Constitution". *—PTI*

'Severe' smog forces ban on outdoor sports in Delhi

States told to enforce compliance, monitor violations strictly

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has ordered the immediate suspension of all outdoor sports activities across Delhi and the National Capital Region as air pollution worsened to 'severe' levels, warning that continued exposure poses a health risk, particularly to children.

In a letter to the Chief Secretaries of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the Commission said some schools and institutions were still conducting outdoor sports despite earlier directions issued in line with a Supreme Court order dated 19 November. It said such actions were "contrary to the spirit and intent" of the apex court's observations and the Commission's instructions.

The CAQM reiterated its 19 November directive seeking postponement of sports competitions scheduled during November and December, and asked state governments to ensure strict compliance. Authorities have been directed to issue instructions to schools, educational institutions, sports bodies and local agencies, sensitise parents about health risks, and monitor compliance, taking action against violations.

Smog engulfs Kartavya Path as people walk amid low visibility, near the India Gate in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

The order comes as Delhi's air quality slipped into the severe category on Sunday, with the Air Quality Index recorded at 459, according to the Central Pollution Control Board, and a thick layer of smog blanketing the city overnight. The Commission has invoked Stage IV of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to curb deterioration.

Under Stage IV, construction and demolition activities have been halted across Delhi-NCR and restrictions imposed on the entry and movement of polluting trucks and heavy vehicles, with limited exemptions for essential services.

Schools have been directed to conduct classes in a hybrid mode for students up to Class IX and XI.

Separately, the CAQM flagged dust, waste accumulation and instances of waste burning on roads maintained by the Delhi Development Authority, saying poor upkeep worsens particulate pollution and needs action. *—PTI*

GUV WANTS JUDICIAL PROBE

Messi event chief in 14-day custody

KOLKATA, 14 DEC

A local court on Saturday remanded Satadru Datta, chief organiser of Lionel Messi's Salt Lake Stadium event, to 14 days' police custody as investigations continued into the chaos at the show.

Datta, arrested by Bidhannagar Police at Kolkata airport, faces charges of mismanagement while escorting Messi and his entourage to Hyderabad. His counsel claimed he was being framed and hoped the remand would "bring clarity."

Messi's 22-minute appearance, his first at the venue since 2011, left many ticket-holders frustrated, sparking security breaches and violence. Spectators, who had travelled nationally and paid high prices, missed seeing the footballer. Police are probing how banned items, including bottled water, were sold inside the stadium.

West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose called for a judicial inquiry, SOPs for public events, arrests, and immediate refunds, saying, "When private parties commercialise sports, the public should not suffer." Opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari rejected the state panel, demanding a court-monitored probe, while the Trinamool Congress dismissed allegations as politically motivated. *—PTI*

Retired Calcutta HC judge Justice Ashim Kumar Ray visits the Salt Lake stadium, a day after Messi event chaos, in Kolkata, on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

Goa fire: Magisterial panel grills landowner, sarpanch

In the aftermath of the tragedy, authorities have launched a crackdown on tourist establishments violating norms **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

PANAJI, 14 DEC

A magisterial inquiry committee has questioned original landowner Pradeep Ghadi Amonkar and Arpora–Nagoa sarpanch Roshan Redkar in connection with the devastating fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in North Goa, which claimed 25 lives on 6 December .

Amonkar was summoned on Saturday afternoon and questioned for nearly seven hours. His lawyer said the inquiry was intensive, with the panel seeking to establish the circumstances that led to the tragedy. The Goa government has appointed a committee headed by District Magistrate Ankit Yadav to investigate the incident.

Redkar also appeared before the committee and said he answered all questions. He has already secured pre-arrest bail in the case. Meanwhile, Goa Police have arrested five managers and staff members of the nightclub. The club's co-owners, Gaurav and Saurabh Luthra, who fled the country after the fire, have been detained in Thailand.

In the aftermath of the tragedy, authorities have launched a crackdown on tourist establishments violating norms. The well-known Cafe CO2 Goa in Vagator was sealed for lacking a fire safety no-objection certificate and structural stability. The fire department also revoked the NOC of Diaz Pool Club and Bar in Anjuna due to inadequate fire-fighting equipment. Earlier, Goya Club in Vagator was shut for alleged violations.

During local body election campaigning, AAP leader Kejriwal blamed the incident on corruption under the BJP-led Goa government. *—PTI*

Goa cracks down on nightclubs before festive season

PANAJI, 14 DEC

Goa has launched a major crackdown on nightclubs ahead of the Christmas and New Year season after a deadly fire killed 25 people, raising serious concerns over safety standards.

As the beach state prepares for its busiest tourism period, inspection teams comprising district officials, police, and fire and emergency services have been checking nightclubs across the North Goa tourism belt. Establishments found violating licence or safety norms are being sealed immediately.

The drive follows the 6 December fire at the Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora, which left 25 people dead. "All clubs are being inspected for valid permissions and safety compliance. Any violations will lead to closure," said government officer Kabir Shirgaonkar, who is leading the inspections.

So far, two prominent clubs in Vagator Goya Club and Cafe CO2 Goa have been sealed.

Officials said Goya Club was built on agricultural land, while Cafe CO2 Goa lacked a mandatory fire safety clearance and had structural stability issues. *—PTI*

4 Chinese chargesheeted in Rs 1K crore cyber fraud

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a chargesheet against 17 individuals, including four Chinese nationals, and 58 companies for their roles in a vast cyber fraud scheme that siphoned off over Rs 1,000 crore. The racket, exposed in October, utilised a complex network of 111 shell companies and digital scams, including deceptive loan applications, fake investment ventures, and fraudulent online jobs.

The CBI's investigation traced the syndicate back to 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, with operations allegedly directed by the Chinese handlers Zou Yi, Huan Liu, Weijian Liu, and Guanhua Wang.

The agency's spokesperson stated, "These shell entities were used to open bank accounts and merchant accounts... enabling rapid layering and diversion of proceeds of crime."

The probe indicated that a UPI ID associated with two Indian suspects remained active in a foreign location as recently as August 2025, showcasing ongoing foreign control. *—PTI*

J&K cops file case against 40 for anti-nat'l activities

JAMMU AND KASHMIR, 14 DEC

Jammu and Kashmir Police have filed a chargesheet against 40 people allegedly involved in anti-national activities in the Valley, an official said on Sunday.

A police spokesperson said a challan was presented before a competent court after completing investigations in a case registered this year under the Egress and Internal Movement Control Ordinance (EIMCO).

The accused are alleged to have engaged in activities detrimental to national security, including illegally crossing into Pakistan to undergo arms training. "The challan was submitted after completion of the investigation," the spokesperson said, adding that evidence collected during the probe formed the basis of the chargesheet. Officials said the case relates to unlawful cross-border movement and activities aimed at disturbing public order and security. Further legal proceedings will follow as per due process, the police said. *—PTI*

'I LOVE MUHAMMAD'

Maulana among nine booked for land grab

BAREILLY, 14 DEC

Maulana Tauqeer Raza, currently in custody over the "I Love Muhammad" controversy, has been booked along with nine others for allegedly threatening a 95-year-old man and his family to transfer land ownership.

Police said when the family resisted, the accused trespassed, threatened them with weapons, molested women, and subjected them to sustained mental harassment. Shakir Beg, son of the nonagenarian victim, reportedly consumed poison due to the distress and is in serious condition at the district hospital.

The FIR, filed by Shakir's daughter, Laiba, cites Sections under BNS. Accused include Raza, his brother-in-law Mohsin Raza, and several others. The incident follows September unrest in Bareilly linked to "I Love Muhammad" posters, which left over two dozen police injured. Charge sheets have been filed against 38 accused, with investigations on-going. *—PTI*

Cough syrup deaths: Ex-cop has European-style mansion

LUCKNOW, 14 DEC

Ornate interiors and luxury brands seized during an Enforcement Directorate raid have drawn attention to the sprawling Lucknow mansion of a dismissed police constable arrested in the codeine-laced cough syrup case.

The two-storey, 7,000-square-foot house in Ahmamau near the Lucknow–Sultanpur highway belongs to Alok Pratap Singh, arrested by the Uttar Pradesh STF on 2 December. Singh's name emerged during interrogation of co-accused Amit Kumar Singh alias Amit Tata. He is lodged in Lucknow jail.

Officials said the mansion features European-style décor, spiral staircases and vintage lighting. Seized items include Prada and Gucci handbags,

Rado watches and electronic devices. A senior officer said preliminary estimates suggest Rs 1.5–2 crore was spent on interiors, with construction costs nearing Rs 5 crore, excluding land. A government valuer is assessing possible illicit funding.

Police allege Singh was part of an illegal codeine-syrup network operating across Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand after his 2019 dismissal. The ED is conducting parallel financial investigations. *—PTI*

SABARIMALA TEAM SAVE 81

PATHANAMTHITTA, 14 DEC

Health facilities at Sabarimala saved 81 pilgrims who suffered heart attacks during the ongoing season, officials said Saturday. Of 103 reported cases, 81 patients were successfully treated.

Six lives were also saved from 25 cardiac arrest cases. All 44 seizure cases were treated successfully.

"Giving special emphasis to life-saving measures, the health department has strengthened its preparedness to handle cardiac emergencies," a government release stated. Cardiology units and essential drugs were made available along the trek.

So far, 95,385 outpatients have received treatment. Twenty-two emergency medical centres operate along the pilgrimage route. *—PTI*

PROPERTY DISPUTE

Evasion tactics collapse in Lucknow's brutal murder case

LUCKNOW, 14 DEC

- The case relates to the killing of Kabir alias Shiv Prakash, who was strangled, set on fire and dumped in Unnao following a property dispute. Investigators said the accused used keypad phones instead of smartphones, frequently changed SIM cards, avoided highways and CCTV-covered routes, and travelled through link roads to evade detection

An attempt to execute the "perfect crime" unravelled after investigation, leading to the arrest of six men accused of murdering a resident and burning his body to erase evidence.

The case relates to the killing of Kabir alias Shiv Prakash, 42, who was strangled, set on fire and dumped in Unnao district following a property dispute, police said. Investigators said the accused used keypad phones instead of smartphones, frequently changed SIM cards, avoided highways and CCTV-covered routes, and travelled through link roads to evade detection.

"These measures slowed the investigation but became the trail that exposed them," police said.

The case surfaced on 19 November after Kabir, missing since 15 November, failed to return home. A missing person report was filed at Nigohan police station. During the search, police received information about a partially burnt, unidentified male body recovered from Bighapur in Unnao. The family later identified the body as Kabir's.

Addressing a press conference on 8 December, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (South) Rallapalli Vasanth Kumar said the accused had "consciously avoided leaving digital or physical clues".

The murder stemmed from a dispute over land along the Rae Bareli–Lucknow highway. Police said the land, originally in the victim's mother's name, had changed hands through transactions challenged by Kabir. On 15 November, Kabir was lured through calls from a keypad phone, abducted, strangled inside a car and later set ablaze using petrol. Five accused were arrested on 8 December, while the sixth was held on 12 December. *—PTI*

During the search, police got information about a partially burnt, unidentified male body recovered from Bighapur in Unnao **PHOTO: AI PIC**

WARMTH ON A COLD MORNING

Foreign tourists in conversation with a 'sadhu' on a cold winter morning, at Assi Ghat in Varanasi, Sunday. Severe cold wave is sending shivers down spines across India, including Delhi, Odisha, Karnataka and Rajasthan ***PHOTO: PTI***

AI crash: 6 months on, college hostel lies in ruins

Six months after the AI-171 plane crash, the BJ Medical College hostel complex in Ahmedabad stands as a haunting reminder, with its charred walls and burnt trees replacing the once lively chatter of students with an eerie stillness.

Scattered across the crash site are grim remnants of daily life burnt cars and motorcycles, twisted beds and furniture, charred books, clothes and personal belongings.

The Atulyam-4 hostel building and the adjoining canteen complex stand abandoned, with entry strictly prohibited.

For residents near the site, memories of the incident still linger, casting a lasting shadow on their lives, with some of them saying they are still afraid to look up at the sky when an aircraft passes overhead.

On 12 June, Air India flight AI-171, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner bound for London, crashed moments after take-off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, killing 260 people.

The aircraft slammed into the BJ Medical College hostel complex in Meghaninagar, turning a lively student neighbourhood into a landscape of ruin and grief.

"The area now lies very silent, only a few birds chirp here," Sanjaybhai, a security guard deployed at the premises by authorities to prevent trespassing, told PTI.

Mahendrasingh Jadeja, a general store owner whose shop is just 50 metres from the point where the aircraft struck, described it as an unimaginable calamity. "In all my years, I have never seen anything like this."

Pointing to a tree behind his shop, the 60-year-old said the aircraft first struck there before crashing into the hostel building.

"It was a scorching summer afternoon. Not many people were outside. When I heard a loud crashing sound, I ran out of my shop. We were all terrified," he recalled.

"Even today, we instinctively look up whenever a plane passes overhead," he added. Another local, Manubhai Rajput, who lives barely 200 metres from the site, said he witnessed the horror unfold.

"The plane was flying unusually low. Before I could understand what was happening, there was thick black smoke and a deafening crash," he said. For over three decades, Rajput and his neighbours lived close to the airport without giving much thought to the aircraft overhead.

"We never looked up at the sky. But that day is etched in my mind. The plane hit a tree first, and then there was a loud sound," he said.

Rajput recalled how hundreds of locals rushed to the site even before police, fire services or the Army arrived.

Tinaben, another resident of Meghaninagar, said she never imagined something like this could happen in Ahmedabad.

"Despite being close to the airport, this area always felt safe," she said.

As an aircraft roared overhead during the conversation, Tinaben paused, looked up nervously and said, "It's still scary."

A senior official of Civil Hospital Ahmedabad, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the state government has yet to decide what to do with the damaged site.

Currently, investigations are going on and the site is strictly prohibited for people, he added. *—PTI*

On 12 June, Air India flight, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner bound for London, crashed into a college hostel moments after take-off. The photo below shows debris of the plane stuck in the Ahmedabad hostel ***PHOTOS: PTI***

SALAR

Queer children are the most bullied: Survey

A recent survey found that LGBTQIA+ children and adolescents face the highest levels of discrimination and bullying in their own homes, schools and neighbourhoods, with activists and stakeholders urging for concerted efforts to address these issues to help them get equal opportunities.

A recent survey of over 900 LGBTQ+ individuals by a Kolkata-based organisation, 'Bridge', which works for the rights of the community across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal, reported that most bullying happens between the ages of 12 and 15 years.

Many young people are forced to drop out of school, losing out on education, future employment, and income security, Bridge's founder director Prithviraj Nath told PTI.

"Even after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 2018, the NALSA judgment in 2014, and Transgender Protection Act of 2019, LGBTQ+ people continue to face systematic exclusion in education, health care, workplaces, and public life," he said.

Basic human rights still remain out of reach for many and it is extremely important that we bring to light the lived realities and challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ community, and have dialogues with the larger society towards equal rights and inclusion of the community, Nath added.

Rudrani Rajkumari, founder of 'Xomonnoy', an LGBTQIA+ rights organisation and support group, pointed out that the government and all stakeholders must make collective efforts to create a roadmap to reduce discrimination and promote equal rights.

"We cannot talk about human rights in India and leave out LGBTQIA+ citizens. Every child deserves safety in their home, respect in their school, and dignity in their workplace. Equality is not a favour, it is a constitutional promise," Rajkumari said.

Former vice principal of Guwahati's Dispur College, Sunita Agarwalla, claimed that it is one of the pioneer institutions in Assam, having done commendable work for the education of the children from the community.

Besides having a gender-neutral toilet, it has reserved seats for such students in both its higher secondary and degree courses, with education being free if such a student needs it and sensitisation programmes are also for all its students regarding the issues of the community, she said.

"I, as an educator, feel that it is very important to understand that people from the LGBTQIA+ community are also human beings and citizens of our country, so they have to be treated equally by everyone in every aspect," Agarwalla said.

Lalit Chandra Bharali College's professor Kunjalata Brahma Bhatiri said that more and more people are voicing their support for equal treatment of people from the community and judgement-free spaces, but a collective and concerted effort from all stratas of society is needed.

Sensitisation and orientation to drive in the very understanding of the basic right to live freely and with dignity is required at all levels, she said.

"More people should talk, discuss, opine and work in attaining dignified living spaces for the queer community," she said.

Tezpur University's faculty from the Department of Social Work, Sammy said, "Incredible work is being done by multiple stakeholders in the field of queer-inclusive education at secondary, college and university levels in the northeastern region but with every new initiative, we face a wall of structural resistance which is coated in layers of binary understanding of society."

Social systems like family, schools, neighbourhoods, state authorities, community institutions, health care services, workplaces and every sector that completes a human being needs gender inclusive approaches and practices as well, she said.

Every department in higher education institutions needs to create safe spaces, accessibility to queer-affirmative support initiatives such as gender-neutral toilets, transport facilities, hostels and common rooms, livelihood opportunities, and speedy redressal mechanism for complaints and quality healthcare services, she said.

Former Cotton University professor and Assamese writer Najma Mukherjee said, "As an educator and litterateur, I believe in the power of art – be it literature or the visual arts. Books and movies have definitely contributed to the shaping of public consciousness in understanding queer experiences all around the world."

Nath pointed out that stakeholders, during discussions on the issue, have pointed out that there is a need for capacity building for school teachers and B. Ed trainees to equip them with skills to support LGBTQIA+ students.

There is also a need to engage more with parents to build understanding and provide supportive environments at home and introduce comics, storybooks, and visual learning tools on gender and sexuality in school libraries, especially in Assamese and other languages, he said.

Rajkumari pointed out that stakeholders have urged the government to include mandatory training for teachers and staffers in all educational institutions, in line with the Supreme Court's guidelines on student mental health, and biannual sensitisation for officials in judicial, police, and administrative departments on laws and rights related to LGBTQIA+ people. *—PTI*

Many young people are forced to drop out of school ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Local body polls set stage for high-stakes Kerala Assembly battle

With the state Assembly elections just months away, the results of Kerala's local body polls have given the Congress-led UDF a favourable position for the upcoming contest and a more challenging situation for the ruling Left Front.

The results also indicated a favorable outlook for the BJP in upcoming state elections, where it currently holds no seats.

According to figures, of the total 1,199 local bodies, the UDF has won four corporations, 54 municipalities, seven district panchayats, 79 block panchayats, and 505 village panchayats in the two-phased LSGD polls held on December 9 and 11. The results were announced on Saturday.

While the LDF won one corporation, 28 municipalities, seven district panchayats, 63 block panchayats, and 340 village panchayats, the NDA secured victory in one corporation, two municipalities, and 26 village panchayats.

The resounding victory in the local self-government elections has become a lifeline for the UDF, which faces a critical Assembly election, while the BJP-led NDA's striking performance has effectively ended the state's traditional bipolar politics.

For the Left Democratic Front, the months ahead of the Assembly election are crucial, as they must prove that their grassroots support base remains intact and that they still have the potential to win a third consecutive term in power.

While the UDF made it clear that it was not overconfident about victory and admitted it would need to work harder to maintain momentum, the CPI(M) state leadership rejected the Congress's allegations, attributing its own setback to unexpected political undercurrents.

The BJP state leadership said that the present achievement in the civic polls would help them move forward with greater strength in the upcoming Assembly elections.

The major political fronts are also busy analysing the reasons behind their successes and failures.

The wresting of the prestigious Thiruvananthapuram City Corporation, which had been ruled by the LDF for several decades, has been a major blow to both traditional fronts in the state.

According to the UDF, a huge anti-incumbency wave, fueled by issues such as the Sabarimala case, corruption, nepotism, communal appeasement, and failed public relations, secured the Opposition front its large mandate.

Focusing on a range of issues—most notably the politically sensitive Sabarimala gold missing case—the UDF's campaign appears to have resonated with a broad cross-section of voters.

Allegations against the state government regarding the PM SHRI scheme, the Centre's labour codes, and attempts to appease the majority community also contributed to their setback, they said.

Soon after the results were announced, Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan and KPCC Chief Sunny Joseph stated that their massive victory reflects strong public resentment and anger against the LDF government.

The Congress leadership attributed the BJP's growth in the state—including its win in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation—to the policies of the LDF. UDF leaders said they would work hard to maintain momentum and replicate the victory in the Assembly polls.

The CPI(M) said the LDF would conduct a deeper review, followed by appropriate corrective action.

The ruling front, which mainly relied on the state government's various social welfare and development programmes, allegations against Pakakkad legislator Rahul Mamkootathil, and the UDF's alleged connections with the Jamaat-e-Islami, admitted that they had not anticipated such a huge setback.

The results indicated that the LDF's recent welfare measures, including hikes in social security and welfare pensions, higher honorariums for ASHA workers, and a new women's security scheme, among many other financial packages announced just before the civic polls did not impress voters.

However, the leadership said the party and the front had suffered even more severe failures in the past but regained public confidence and made strong comebacks later.

"At every stage, the party has moved forward after conducting proper assessments and making necessary corrections. It is part of the party's history to regain the confidence of the people and bounce back stronger through such corrections," the CPI(M) state secretariat said in a statement.

The Marxist party accused the UDF of contesting the polls by openly and covertly aligning with all communal forces. The Left Front also rejected the claim that the BJP achieved a major victory in the civic polls, saying it does not align with the facts.

Although the BJP emerged as the single largest party in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, it failed to secure a simple majority, the ruling party pointed out.

"The LDF reclaimed the Pandalam municipality, which the BJP had previously won. In the Palakkad municipality, the BJP lost its majority. The LDF also wrested Kulanada, Cherukol, and Mutholi panchayats from the BJP. Across Kerala, the BJP holds only one district panchayat seat—in Kasaragod district—and that too is a pre-existing one," it said.

BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said that when people sincerely want change, it will definitely happen. "India witnessed such a change in 2014. It is also becoming a reality in Kerala through the 2025 local government elections," Chandrasekhar said in a Facebook post.

This movement for change is only going to gain strength in the coming days, he added, saying it will pave the way for decisive changes in Kerala's political culture and ensure development for its people. *—PTI*

The Kerala local polls win for BJP also indicated a favorable outlook for the party in upcoming Kerala elections, where it currently holds no seats ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

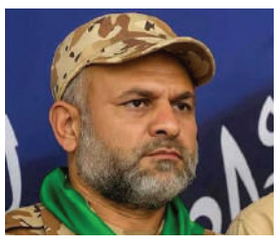


PHOTO: FB

Hamas confirms death of senior commander

GAZA CITY, 14 DEC

Hamas has confirmed the death of its senior commander Raed Saad following an Israeli attack in Gaza, marking a significant assassination since the October ceasefire agreement. The Israeli military reported that Saad was killed in a strike near Gaza City, with at least 25 individuals injured in the incident. Khalil al-Hayya, the chief of Hamas in Gaza, confirmed the killing in a video statement on Sunday, accusing Israel of violating the ceasefire established in October. Al-Hayya stated, called on US President Donald Trump to enforce and respect the ceasefire deal. Since the ceasefire commenced, Israeli forces have reportedly conducted nearly 800 attacks on Gaza, killing at least 386 people. *—Agencies*

Hong Kong pro-democracy party dissolves

HONG KONG, 14 DEC

Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party voted on Sunday to dissolve after more than 30 years of activism, marking the end of an era in the Chinese semiautonomous city's once-diverse political landscape. Democratic Party chairperson Lo Kin-hei said about 97 per cent of members' ballots supported liquidation, calling it the best way forward. "As the times have shifted, we now, with deep regret, must bring this chapter to a close". Dozens of its members, including former party chairs Albert Ho and Wu Chi-wai, were arrested recently. Media tycoon Jimmy Lai was also charged, and his Apple Daily newspaper was shut. *—PTI*

3 TTP terrorists killed in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

PESHAWAR, 14 DEC

In an intelligence-led operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan's security forces have killed three terrorists linked to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The operation took place near the Pak-Afghan border in Bajaur district after intelligence indicated the presence of these individuals. The terrorists were reportedly involved in various subversive activities, including assaults on security personnel and IED attacks. Forces recovered a significant cache of arms and ammunition. Local police subsequently cordoned off the area and initiated a search operation. Reports from the Centre for Research and Security Studies indicate a troubling trend, with a 25 per cent rise in terrorist incidents in 2025, with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa experiencing the worst impacts. *—PTI*

Indian-origin man among 4 dead in SA temple collapse

JOHANNESBURG, 14 DEC

A four-storey Hindu temple collapse in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, has resulted in the deaths of four individuals, including a 52-year-old Indian-origin man, Vickey Jairaj Panday. The New Ahobilam Temple of Protection was under construction when part of the structure gave way. Initially, two fatalities were reported, but the toll rose as rescue teams worked over the weekend. Panday, an executive member of the temple trust, had been integral to the project since its inception. Operations were briefly halted due to adverse weather, and questions arose over the temple's construction legality, as no official building plans had been approved. Provincial Minister Thulasizwe Buthelezi expressed his commitment to continuing rescue efforts as long as necessary. *—PTI*

Lone bystander tackles Aus gunman, wrests gun

Sydney beach shooting termed a terrorist attack on Jews

SYDNEY, 14 DEC

As two gunmen opened fire on Australia's Sydney's Bondi Beach, killing at least 11 people and injuring dozens other, dramatic footage showed a man sneaking up behind one of the shooters and tackling him. He wrested the gun from the shooter and pointed it at the attacker.

The bystander, who is crouching behind a parked car, rushed towards the alleged gunman as he was firing upon the crowd during a Hanukkah event. He leaps on to the alleged gunman and wrestles the gun from his hands. The video shows the alleged gunman falling to the ground before the bystander points the gun at him as the alleged gunman backs away.

"This attack was designed to target Sydney's Jewish community," the state's Premier Chris Minns said. The massacre was declared a terrorist attack due to the event targeted and the weapons used.

A bystander snuck up from behind one of the 2 shooters in Sydney on Sunday and disarmed him *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said in a statement that his thoughts were with all those affected.

"The scenes in Bondi are shocking and distressing," he said.

Lachlan Moran, 32, from Melbourne, was waiting for his family nearby when he heard shots. He said dropped the beer he was carrying for his brother and ran.

"I freaked out and ran away. ... I started sprinting. I just had that intuition. I sprinted as quickly as I could," Moran said.

He said he heard shooting off and on for about five minutes.

"Everyone just dropped all their possessions and everything and were running, and people were crying, and it was just horrible," Moran said.

The incident has prompted the UK to tighten security around its Jewish regions. Both Australia and the UK have had several "anti-semitic" attacks recently.

Mass shooting deaths in Australia are extremely rare. A 1996 massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur, where a lone gunman killed 35 people, prompted the government to drastically tighten gun laws and made it much more difficult for Australians to acquire firearms. *—Agencies*

DURING EXAM

Gunman kills 2, injures 9 in US' Brown University

Law enforcement officials gather near Brown University in Providence, RI, during the investigation of a shooting *PHOTO: PTI*

PROVIDENCE, 14 DEC

A shooter dressed in black killed at least two people and wounded nine others at Brown University during final exams on the Ivy League campus, authorities said. Police were searching for the suspect.

University President Christina Paxson said 10 people who were shot were students. Another person was injured by fragments from the shooting on Saturday, but it was not clear if the victim was a student, she said.

Officers scattered across the campus and into an affluent neighbourhood filled with historic and stately brick homes, searching academic buildings, backyards and porches for hours late into the night after the shooting erupted in the afternoon.

The suspect, believed to be in his 30s was a male in dark clothing who was last seen leaving the engineering building where the attack happened, said Timothy O'Hara, deputy chief of Providence police. Witnesses said the suspect was wearing a camouflage mask. Authorities believe he used a handgun.

- The suspect, believed to be in his 30s was a male in dark clothing. It is unclear how he entered the building and opened fire on a students who were writing their final exams

Investigators were not yet sure how the shooter got inside the first-floor classroom. Outer doors of the building were unlocked, but rooms being used for final exams required badge access.

The shooting comes despite Rhode Island having some of the strictest gun laws in the US. *—PTI*

B'desh EC demands security amid fresh unrest

DHAKA, 14 DEC

The Election Commission (EC) has demanded extra security for its chief, commissioners and officials as unrest gripped Bangladesh after gunmen shot a parliamentary polls candidate and a frontline leader of last year's street movement dubbed 'July Uprising'.

"The EC has written to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) urging comprehensive security arrangements for the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Election Commissioners (ECs), and senior officials of the Election Commission Secretariat," the state-run BSS news agency reported on Saturday.

The EC simultaneously sought extra security for its field-level offices before the 13th national election, as two of them came under attack in Lakshmipur and Pirojpur after the announcement of the schedule for polls on Thursday.

- The EC sought extra security for field-level offices before the 13th national election, as two of them came under attack after the announcement of the polls schedule on Thursday.

The commission demanded an additional escort vehicle for the CEC, while one police escort with a vehicle is currently in place for him.

The EC on Thursday said that parliamentary election would be held on 12 February, while a day later, Sharif Osman Hadi was shot from close range in the head, critically wounding him, as he launched his campaign from the capital. *— PTI*

A terrorist attack killed 6 UN peacekeeping personnel in Sudan's Abyei region *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

6 B'desh UN peacekeepers killed in Sudan

DHAKA, 14 DEC

The Bangladesh Army said that six of its personnel serving in the UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan were killed and eight others were injured during a terrorist attack.

The incident occurred when terrorists attacked a UN base in Sudan's Abyei region, a military spokesman said in Dhaka on Saturday.

The Defence Ministry's Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR) directorate said in an initial statement that fighting was still ongoing in the region, which borders South Sudan.

South Sudan became an independent nation in 2011 through a referendum after decades of civil war with Arab majority northerners. However, its military has recently been roped into the Sudan civil war, helping the Sudan Armed Forces regain control of the vital Heglig oil field which the paramilitary RSF recently seized.

- At least 50 people, including UN peacekeepers, have been killed in attacks in Abyei over the three-year civil war. Eight others were injured during Saturday's attack

At least 50 people, including UN peacekeepers, have been killed in attacks in Abyei, marking it as the deadliest incident in a three-year-long series of clashes in the disputed oil-rich area claimed by both South Sudan and Sudan.

Bangladesh is a major contributor to UN blue helmet missions, with at least 6,000 personnel deployed. *—PTI*

Curfew in Thailand's Trat as clashes continue

BANGKOK, 14 DEC

Thailand's military imposed a curfew in some areas of Trat Province on Sunday, citing the security situation along the border.

The military said a curfew has been enforced in the five districts of Trat Province.

Thai media reports said the decision followed an incident on Saturday night in which three M79 grenades were fired at the headquarters of the Marine Corps Task Force in Trat Province. No casualties were reported.

This is the second Thai province to impose a curfew after the latest round of clashes along the Thailand-Cambodia border began. Earlier, the Thai military had imposed similar restrictions in the four border districts of Sa Kaeo Province on Wednesday.

The curfew announcement comes amid continuing hostilities between Thailand and Cambodia.

A village security volunteer splashes water to control a fire at a house after what a Thai soldier said was a Cambodian artillery strike in Sisaket province, Thailand, Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Thailand Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul has denied reaching any ceasefire agreement – despite US President Donald Trump's claims.

More than two dozen people on both sides of the border have officially been reported killed in the past week's fighting, while more than half a million have been displaced.

Thailand said a rocket attack from Cambodia on Sunday killed a 63-year-old villager, its first civilian death as a direct result of the war. *— Agencies*

TRUMP VOWS RETALIATION AFTER IS ATTACK IN SYRIA KILLS 2 US SOLDIERS

WASHINGTON, 14 DEC

US President Donald Trump vowed "very serious retaliation" following an ambush by an ISIS gunman that resulted in the deaths of two US soldiers and one civilian interpreter in Syria. During a press conference at the White House, Trump lamented the loss of "three great patriots" and characterised the attack as an affront to both the United States and Syria.

"This was an ISIS attack on us and Syria," he stated, expressing condolences and stating, "We mourn the lost and we pray for them and their parents and their loved ones." When asked about potential military action, he confirmed: "Yes, we will retaliate."

- Trump said it was an ISIS attack in the US and Syria after a gunman associated with the terror group killed 2 American soldiers and an interpretor in Syria

The attack took place on 13 December during counter-terrorism operations near Palmyra, as confirmed by US Central Command. The lone assailant was killed, and three other US soldiers were wounded.

Syria's President, Ahmed al-Sharaa, also expressed deep anger over the incident in the "very dangerous part" of the country. The US has around 900 troops in Syria. *—ANI*

CRUCIAL ELECTION

Far-Right Prez or Communist? Chile votes

SANTIAGO, 14 DEC

Chileans head to polls on Sunday in a presidential runoff that pits the country's most ideologically extreme candidates in decades against one another: the far-Right José Antonio Kast and the Communist former labour minister Jeannette Jara. Despite Jara narrowly leading the first round, polls indicate Kast is the strong front-runner, poised to become Chile's most Right-wing President since the end of the Pinochet dictatorship.

It remains a question whether Kast, an admirer of US President Donald Trump, can implement his grandiose promises, which include slashing $6 billion in public spending over just 18 months without eliminating social benefits, deporting over 3,00,000 immigrants in Chile with no legal status and expanding the powers of the army to fight organised crime in a country still haunted by Gen Augusto Pinochet'sbloody military dictatorship from 1973 to 1990.

Chileans decide between former labour minister Jeannette Jara and far-Right José Antonio Kast *PHOTO: X*

"Both are too extreme for me," said Juan Carlos Pileo, 44. Coting is now mandatory in Chile's elections. "I can't trust someone who says she's a Communist to be moderate. And I can't trust someone who exaggerates the amount of crime we have in this country and blames immigrants to be fair and respectful."

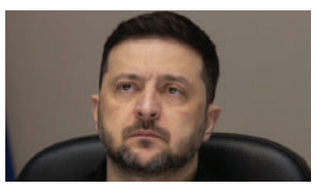
As the pandemic shuttered borders, transnational criminal organisations like Tren de Aragua seized illegal migration routes to gain a foothold in Chile, long considered among Latin America's safest countries. Homicides hit a record high in 2022, the first year of President Gabriel Boric's tenure.

However, the government has since curbed crime.

Jara, meanwhile, became popular for passing some of the administration's most important welfare measures. *—PTI*

Zelenskyy offers to drop NATO bid in peace deal

BERLIN, 14 DEC



Ukrainian President **Volodymyr Zelenskyy** voiced readiness to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees, but rejected the US push for ceding territory to Russia as he arrived in Berlin for talks with US envoys on ending the war.

Zelenskyy arrived at the Chancellery ahead of the expected talks with US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, part of a series of meetings in Berlin between Ukrainian, US and European officials.

Responding to journalists' questions in audio clips on a WhatsApp group chat before the talks, Zelenskyy said that since the US and some European nations had rejected Ukraine's push to join NATO, Kyiv expects the West to offer a set of guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members.

"These security guarantees are an opportunity to prevent another wave of Russian aggression," he said. "And this is already a compromise on our part."

He emphasised that any security assurances would need to be legally binding and supported by the US Congress. His statement comes as he negotiates a US peace-deal, which has been viewed as favouring Russia. *—PTI*

QUOTE of THE DAY

We (Neal and wife) do limit their time on YouTube and other platforms and other forms of media. On weekdays we tend to be more strict, on weekends we tend to be less so. We're not perfect by any stretch

—NEAL MOHAN
YouTube CEO

Food prices deflate by (-)2.78% in November

Meanwhile, the consumer price index in Nov was 0.71%

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Food prices stayed in deflation during November 2025 at negative 2.78 per cent, rising from the record low of negative 3.7 per cent in October, even as overall consumer inflation edged up. A report by the Union Bank of India showed that the broader price trend in the economy continued to remain soft.

The report said that the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for November printed 0.71 per cent, higher than 0.25 per cent in October but still below the 1 per cent mark for the second straight month. It notes that this number matched its earlier estimate. Core inflation eased slightly to 4.34 per cent from 4.41 per cent in October, while fuel inflation rose to 2.32 per cent from 1.98 per cent. CPI excluding vegetables fell to 2.86 per cent, compared with 2.99 per cent the previous month. The report adds that if the impact of the gold price jump is removed, CPI stands at negative 0.12 per cent, showing very soft price pressures.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

It highlights that the negative food inflation reading continues to be shaped by a high base of 8.2 per cent from November 2024.

The report explains that food prices increased month-on-month across many categories in November, except for cereals and sugar. Early signs from the Department of Consumer Affairs' on-the-ground data point to more firmness in food prices in December. As a result, vegetable inflation rose month-on-month to 2.55 per cent, compared with a negative 0.28 per cent in October.

- Core inflation eased slightly to 4.34 per cent from 4.41 per cent in Oct, while fuel inflation rose to 2.32 per cent from 1.98 per cent. CPI excluding vegetables fell to 2.86 per cent, compared with 2.99 per cent last month.

Edible oil inflation, which had touched 21.24 per cent in August, continued to slow and fell to 7.8 per cent in November. The vegetables index moved up from 212 in October to 217 in November. CPI excluding vegetables softened further, again showing the strong impact vegetables have on the headline number. *—ANI*

RS 3,765 CR NET OUTFLOW

FPIs withdraw ₹17,955 cr from equities in Dec

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Foreign investors continued to pare their exposure to Indian equities in early December, withdrawing Rs 17,955 crore (about USD 2 billion) in the first two weeks of the month.

This has taken the total foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outflow in 2025 to around Rs 1.6 lakh crore (USD 18.4 billion), according to data from the National Securities Depository Ltd (NSDL).

The latest selling follows a net outflow of Rs 3,765 crore in November, extending the pressure on domestic equity markets. The trend briefly reversed in October, when FPIs invested Rs 14,610 crore, breaking a three-month streak of heavy withdrawals. Prior to that, FPIs had sold equities worth Rs 23,885 crore in September, Rs 34,990 crore in August, and Rs 17,700 crore in July.

Market experts attribute the sustained outflows to a combination of global and domestic factors.

Elevated US interest rates, tighter global liquidity and a shift towards safer or higher-yielding developed-market assets have dampened investor appetite for emerging markets.

In addition, the weakening Indian rupee and relatively rich equity valuations have made Indian stocks less attractive compared with other emerging market opportunities. *—PTI*

Ola start 4680 Bharat Cell EVs hyperdelivery

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Under the Hyperservice initiative, Ola Electric on Sunday announced the commencement of same-day registration and delivery of its 4680 Bharat Cell–powered vehicles in Bengaluru. As part of the program, customers complete their purchase either online or at an Ola Electric Store and ride home on a fully registered vehicle on the same day. Ola Electric announced the nationwide rollout of its in-app service appointment feature to schedule 'vehicle servicing', and revealed plans to scale up Hyperservice into an open platform to redefine EV servicing in India. Explaining these capabilities, a company spokesperson said, "We have been able to do this because of our D2C and vertically integrated model that offers us a massive advantage." *—PTI*

Copper industry asks 3% safeguard duty on imports

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Indian Primary Copper Producers Association (IPCPA) has raised alarms over the detrimental impact of cheap copper imports, citing that they are "severely damaging" Indian manufacturing. The industry body has urged immediate government intervention, including the imposition of a 3 per cent safeguard duty and quantitative restrictions on imports. With over Rs 20,000 crore invested to enhance domestic capacity, the IPCPA highlighted concerns regarding zero-duty imports under free trade agreements (FTAs), particularly related to the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), where customs duties on copper wire rods have dropped to one per cent and are set to be eliminated by FY27. The copper industry faces further pressure from collapsing Treatment and Refining Charges (TC/RC) and an influx of zero-duty imports, urging the government to act swiftly on these issues. *—PTI*

Gold, silver set to extend record rally: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Gold and silver prices are expected to extend their record rally in the coming week as investors closely watch global inflation data and key macroeconomic indicators that influence central bank policy. Markets will focus on inflation readings from India, the US, Europe and the UK, along with manufacturing and services PMI data across major economies. In the US, non-farm payrolls, weekly jobless claims, housing data and consumer sentiment will also guide bullion prices. Gold rose to a lifetime high on the MCX, supported by a weaker dollar, a softer rupee and safe-haven demand amid geopolitical tensions. Silver outperformed, hitting fresh record highs, driven by falling yields, strong ETF inflows and robust industrial demand, particularly from the solar and electronics sectors. *—PTI*

Parl panel encourages crude source diversification

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

A parliamentary committee has raised concerns about India's heavy reliance on crude oil imports, which accounts for nearly 89 per cent of its requirements, and the associated geopolitical risks.

In a report submitted to Parliament, the Public Undertaking Committee underscored the vulnerability this dependence creates, particularly in light of the geopolitical tensions like the Russia-Ukraine conflict and unrest in the Middle East.

The report urged the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) and state-run oil companies to accelerate efforts to diversify sources of crude oil both geographically and contractually.

It also advocated for bolstering the strategic petroleum reserves and developing alternative import routes to enhance energy security.

"India could face the risk of crude oil import uncertainty, which could adversely impact supply and prices," the panel noted, highlighting the need for institutionalising risk management tools such as hedging and flexible term contracts.

Furthermore, the report pointed out the internal challenges facing the sector, including aging oil fields and rising costs associated with land acquisition and project delays.

"These issues not only affect India's energy import bill but also impede the ability of central public sector undertakings to secure overseas exploration assets," it stated.

- The report urged the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) and state-run oil companies to accelerate efforts to diversify sources of crude oil both geographically and contractually.

The committee recommended improved coordination between MoPNG and the Ministry of External Affairs to strengthen diplomatic relations with oil-producing nations and secure favourable investment conditions.

Additionally, it suggested that public sector undertakings adopt robust risk management frameworks to ensure a resilient and sustainable energy strategy. *—PTI*

Mcap of 8 top firms declines by Rs 79,129 cr

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The combined market capitalisation of eight of India's ten most valued companies declined by Rs 79,129.21 crore last week, as a largely bearish trend weighed on equity markets. Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank recorded the sharpest losses.

The BSE benchmark index fell by 444.71 points, or 0.51 per cent, during the week.

Among the top ten firms, only Reliance Industries and Larsen & Toubro (L&T) ended the week with gains. The remaining eight—HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), ICICI Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), Infosys, Bajaj Finance and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) saw their valuations erode.

Bajaj Finance suffered the biggest decline, with its market capitalisation dropping Rs 19,289.7 crore to Rs 6.33 lakh crore. ICICI Bank followed, losing Rs 18,516.31 crore to close at Rs 9.77 lakh crore.

Bharti Airtel's valuation fell by Rs 13,884.63 crore, while SBI lost Rs 7,846.02 crore. Infosys saw its market value decline by Rs 7,145.95 crore, and TCS shed Rs 6,783.92 crore. HDFC Bank's market capitalisation slipped by Rs 4,460.93 crore, while LIC recorded a marginal fall of Rs 1,201.75 crore.

In contrast, Reliance Industries added Rs 20,434.03 crore to its valuation, while L&T gained Rs 4,910.82 crore.

Reliance Industries remained the country's most valued firm, followed by HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, TCS and ICICI Bank. *—PTI*

CBDT urges taxpayers for data checks

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) is curbing bogus tax deduction claims, warning taxpayers to correct wrong filings after uncovering widespread misuse of donation-based exemptions. CBDT has strengthened data-driven monitoring to detect suspicious claims early. As a result, many taxpayers have revised returns for the current assessment year 2025–26 and filed updated returns for earlier years.

The tax authority has also recently acted against several intermediaries that run nationwide agent networks to file returns with false claims for commissions, enabling individuals to cut tax liability through bogus donations to charities and Registered Unrecognised Political Parties' (RUPPs) and seek improper refunds. During enforcement, CBDT found that several RUPPs were non-filers, non-operational at their listed addresses, or not engaged in political activity, and were being used to route funds and issue fake donation receipts. Follow-up searches led to the recovery of evidence pointing to bogus individual donations and fake corporate social responsibility contributions.

To help taxpayers correct errors, it has begun a targeted NUDGE campaign, described as a taxpayer-friendly measure in the release. From 12 December, text and email advisories are being sent to taxpayers on their registered mobile numbers and email addresses, urging them to update their returns & withdraw any incorrect claims. *—ANI*

NCLAT denies Sebi's penalty recovery plea against Annies Apparel

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

In a significant ruling, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has rejected the Securities and Exchange Board of India's (SEBI) appeal to recover a penalty of Rs 21.80 lakh from Annies Apparel, which is undergoing liquidation. The tribunal clarified that under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), claims cannot be filed once the liquidation process commences.

The NCLAT upheld the decision of the liquidator and the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), stating, "The statutory intent of the IBC clearly freezes all claims as on the liquidation commencement date." The tribunal emphasised that the Liquidator acted within the bounds of the IBC and relevant regulations.

SEBI had attempted to lodge its claim on 20 June, 2023, a staggering 797 days after the liquidation announcement, citing unawareness of the proceedings. The NCLAT dismissed their appeal, stating, "Basis the aforesaid discussion, we are of the considered view that there is no infirmity in the impugned order rejecting ... The Appeal is devoid of substance and is dismissed."

This ruling reinforces the strict timelines and regulations governing insolvency proceedings in India. *—PTI*

TV prices to rise from Jan due to memory chips shortage, weak rupee

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Television prices in India are expected to rise by 3–10 per cent from January next year, as manufacturers face a sharp increase in memory chip costs and the continuing depreciation of the rupee, which has recently crossed the Rs 90-to-a-dollar mark.

The weak currency has placed the TV industry under strain because only about 30 per cent of the value of an LED TV is added domestically.

Key components such as open cells, semiconductor chips and motherboards are largely imported, making production highly sensitive to exchange rate movements.

The situation has been worsened by a global memory chip crisis, driven by surging demand for high-bandwidth memory used in AI servers. Chipmakers are prioritising high-margin AI products, tightening supplies for consumer electronics such as televisions. As a result, prices of memory components, including DRAM and flash, have risen steeply.

Haier Appliances India President NS Satish said LED TV prices could increase by around 3 per cent due to the chip shortage and the falling rupee.

Meanwhile, Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd, which manufactures TVs for brands such as Thomson, Kodak and Blaupunkt, said memory chip prices have jumped 500 per cent in the past three months, potentially leading to a 7–10 per cent price hike from January.

Videotex, an ODM that manufactures TVs for several Indian and global brands, said flash memory and DDR4 prices have surged by up to 1,000 per cent, with supply being diverted to AI data centres.

- The weak currency has placed the TV industry under strain because only about 30 per cent of the value of an LED TV is added domestically.

The pressure is expected to continue until at least Q2 next year.

Experts warn that the price rise may offset the recent sales boost from the GST cut to 18 per cent on larger TV screens. *—PTI*

SPOOFING & JAMMING INCIDENTS

IATA expresses concern over rising GPS issues

GENEVA/ NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

Increasing incidents of flights experiencing GPS spoofing and jamming is a concern, and pilots need to be more vigilant, according to global airlines' grouping IATA.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) represents around 360 airlines that account for over 80 per cent of the global air traffic. Air India, IndiGo, Air India Express and SpiceJet are also part of the grouping.

In recent times, there have also been instances of GPS spoofing and interference incidents at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai airports.

During interactions this week in Geneva, IATA officials said rising incidents of GPS interference incidents are a concern. IATA Director General Willie Walsh said incidents of GPS spoofing and jamming require pilots to be more vigilant in terms of operation, because the increase has been very significant.

"It exists right across the world now". Global Positioning System (GPS)/ Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) spoofing and jamming refers to attempts to manipulate a user's navigation system by giving false signals.

International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) identifies GNSS spoofing as a form of International Radio Frequency Interference (RFI).

These figures are based on data compiled from the Flight Data eXchange (FDX), an aggregated de-identified database of flight data that is part of the Global Aviation Data Management (GADM) programme.

In 2022, the GPS loss rate was 31, based on a relatively low number of recorded flights and in 2024, it was 56, showing a steady trend despite higher traffic volumes. The GPS loss rate is expected to reach 59 this year, according to a presentation by Careen. *—PTI*

ADB approves major metro and health funding

NEW DELHI, 14 DEC

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved major new financing to support urban transport and public health reforms in India, underlining its commitment to inclusive and sustainable development.

ADB has sanctioned a USD 240 million loan for the expansion of the Chennai Metro Rail network, marking the second tranche of its USD 780 million financing facility approved in 2022. The funding will support 20km of elevated and underground corridors on metro lines 3, 4 and 5, along with 18 new stations featuring universal access and disaster-resilient design. The project aims to deliver cleaner, safer and more reliable urban transport, improve multimodal connectivity and support Chennai's low-carbon development goals. Construction is scheduled for completion by mid-2028.

In a separate initiative, ADB has approved a USD 108 million results-based loan to help Mizoram strengthen its public health system and achieve universal health coverage. The programme will support the rollout of the Mizoram Universal Health Care Scheme, providing coverage of up to Rs 500,000 per family annually through a single, cashless platform, with full state support for poor and vulnerable households. *—ANI*

Suriname picks new coach ahead of WC playoffs

LONDON, 14 DEC

Veteran Henk ten Cate has been appointed the new coach of Suriname as it looks ahead to the World Cup playoffs in March, the country's football association said on Sunday.Ten Cate, 71, is a former coach of Ajax Amsterdam and has worked as an assistant at Barcelona and Chelsea. The Dutchman will take charge of Suriname's bid to qualify for a first-ever World Cup when it meets Bolivia in a play-off match in Monterrey on 26 March. If it wins that match, it will meet Iraq on March 31 to decide a place at the 2026 finals, going into Group I with France, Norway, and Senegal and playing its matches in Boston, Philadelphia, and Toronto.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Chandaria clinches Formula 4 Indian Championship title

CHENNAI, 14 DEC

The third season of the FIA-certified Formula 4 Indian Championship, part of the Indian Racing Festival (IRF), culminated in a thrilling finale at the Madras International Circuit in Chennai on Sunday, as Shane Chandaria became the youngest title winner. Having entered the 2025 season as a fresh-faced rookie, the 15-year-old Kenyan finished it as the indisputable champion, also the first championship win of his young career. Chandaria made the most of the head start in Race 1 to clinch the championship itself. Though the pole-sitter finished second behind Kichcha's Kings Bengaluru's Sachel Rotge, the top 2 finish was enough to seal the title.In Race 2, Frenchman Rotge and Chandaria, as they so often have this season.—*PTI*

Russell's onslaught fails to save day for Knight Riders

ABU DHABI, 14 DEC

Andre Russell displayed his hitting prowess with an unbeaten 33-ball-53 but failed to take Abu Dhabi Knight Riders past Dubai Capitals, which won a close ILT20 League match by nine runs. Dubai Capitals posted a competitive 196 for 5, riding on US international Shayan Jahangir's 54-ball-99 and then stopped ADKR in its blocks at 187 for 8 despite Russell hitting four sixes and an equal number of boundaries. Batting first, the Capitals recovered from early setbacks through a defining 115-run partnership between Jordan Cox (29 off 30) and Jahangir. He anchored the innings before falling agonisingly short of a century, having hit 10 fours and five sixes.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@NBA

Spurs upset Thunder on Victor return

NEW YORK, 14 DEC

Victor Wembanyama made a dazzling return from injury as the San Antonio Spurs powered to a 111-109 victory over the Oklahoma City Thunder to reach the NBA Cup final on Saturday night. French prodigy Wembanyama playing after a 12-game absence following a month-long injury layoff led a superb performance from the Spurs to send Oklahoma City crashing to just their second defeat of the season. The Spurs will face the New York Knicks in Tuesday's final in Las Vegas. In the earlier match, Jalen Brunson powered the Knicks to their first NBA Cup final with a 132-120 win over the Orlando Magic.—*PTI*

U19 AC: India thrash Pakistan by 90 runs

Mohammad removed both Pak openers inside the first 10 overs

DUBAI, 14 DEC

Indian players celebrate 90-run victory over Pakistan PHOTO: PTI

A disciplined bowling performance, led by all-rounder Kanishk Chouhan and seamer Deepesh Devendran, powered India to a comprehensive 90-run victory over Pakistan in their Group A match of the Under-19 Asia Cup, here Sunday.

After being put in to bat, India posted a competitive 240 all out in 46.1 overs, riding on a fluent 85 from Aaron George and useful contributions from captain Ayush Mhatre (38) and Chouhan (46).

Pakistan were then bundled out for 150 in 41.2 overs, never quite recovering from the early setbacks in a chase of 241. India got off to a brisk start with skipper Mhatre striking four boundaries and three sixes during his 25-ball knock before Mohammad Sayyam removed both openers inside the first 10 overs.

George then held the innings together, finding the gaps consistently and adding stability through the middle phase. Chouhan's late flourish, which included three sixes, helped India cross the 230-run mark despite losing wickets regularly. For Pakistan, Sayyam (3/67) and Subhan (3/42) were the standout bowlers, while Niqab Shafiq chipped in with two wickets. Captain Farhan (23) and Huzaifa Ahsan attempted to steady the innings, but Chouhan's incisive off-spin broke the resistance. Ahsan top-scored for Pakistan with 70 off 83 balls, but lacked support at the other end.

Indian team maintains no-handshake policy against Pakistan

India maintained the "no-handshake" policy against Pakistan at the toss for their U-19 Asia Cup match here on Sunday.

India captain Ayush Mhatre and his Pakistani counterpart Farhan Yousaf ignored each other during the toss at the ICC Academy grounds here.

Pakistan won the toss and elected to field first, and India made 240 all out in 46.1 overs.

Both India and Pakistan began their campaigns on a winning note in the tournament. India thrashed hosts UAE by 234 runs in the tournament opener on Friday, with Vaibhav Suryavanshi making a match-winning knock of 171 off 95 balls.

Pakistan handed a 297-run defeat to Malaysia on the same day.

Brief scores:
India U-19: 240 all out in 46.1 overs (Aaron George 85, Chouhan 46; Mohammad Sayyam 3/67, Abdul Subhan 3/42). Pakistan U-19: 150 all out in 41.2 overs (Huzaifa Ahsan 70; Kanishk Chouhan 3/33, Deepesh 3/16) —*PTI*

SYED MUSHTAQ ALI TROPHY

Ton-up Jaiswal dazzles as Mumbai keep final hopes alive

AMBI (PUNE), 14 DEC

Ignored by national selectors in the T20 set-up, Yashasvi Jaiswal sent another stern reminder to the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee with a blistering 48-ball century as defending champions Mumbai crushed Haryana by four wickets in a high-scoring Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Super League B match here on Sunday.

Having tamely surrendered to Hyderabad in the opening Super League game, which severely impacted their Net Run Rate, Jaiswal (101 off 50 balls) and Sarfaraz Khan (64 off 24 balls) came out all guns blazing, chasing down a stiff target of 235 set by Haryana in 17.3 overs to keep their chances of qualifying for the summit clash alive. The duo added 88 runs in just 6.1 overs to make a difficult chase look like a walk in the park.

During the post-match presentation ceremony, Jaiswal requested his teammate Sarfaraz to join him while collecting the Player of the Match cheque of Rs 50,000.When Haryana skipper Ankit Kumar (89 off 42 balls) and talented all-rounder Nishant Sindhu (63 no off 38 balls) added 110 runs in only 8.1 overs, little did they expect the carnage that was to follow.

Veteran Ajinkya Rahane (21 off 10 balls) started in earnest with Jaiswal also giving new ball bowler Anshul Kamboj (1/63 in 4 overs) and left-armer Ishant Bhardwaj (1/56 in 3 overs) the charge, hitting both of them for sixes and boundaries galore.

The problem with all Haryana quicks was that their pace hovered around 125 to 130 kmph, which was exactly what the doctor ordered for Mumbai on a placid track.

Brief Scores: Haryana 234/3 in 20 overs (Ankit Kumar 89, Nishant Sindhu 63 no, Sairaj Patil 2/44). Mumbai 238/6 in 20 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 101 no, Sarfaraz Khan 64, Anshul Kamboj 1/63). —*PTI*

Tendulkar presents WC jersey to Messi

MUMBAI, 14 DEC

Wankhede Stadium, used to roar for cover drives and last-over finishes, found itself at the centre of a different sporting crossover on Sunday evening as Sachin Tendulkar and Lionel Messi shared the stage in Mumbai.

Tendulkar presented Messi with his signed jersey. Messi responded with a signed football, sealing a moment that bridged two sporting worlds without ceremony-heavy frills. "If I have to speak about his game, it is not the right platform. But what does one talk about him? He has achieved everything. We admire his dedication, determination, commitment and above all, he is loved so much for his humility and the person he is. On behalf of all Mumbaikars, wishing him and his family the very best of health," Tendulkar said about Messi. Messi also presented his signed Argentina jersey to Indian footballer Sunil Chhetri.

The evening also featured a brief penalty shoot-out. Sunil Chhetri stepped up first but missed from the spot.

Messi followed and made no mistake, calmly finding the back of the net. The stadium erupted in cheers, with sections of the crowd chanting, "Visca Barca."

Lionel Messi, alongside Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, officially inaugurated Project Mahadeva, a move seen as a boost for grassroots football in the state. The initiative aims to inspire young players across Maharashtra. —*PTI*

COMMANDING DISPLAY

India secures historic gold in Squash World Cup

CHENNAI, 14 DEC

The Express Avenue Mall was packed to the hilt, so to say, as the Indian team delivered a performance worthy of the occasion, treating the home crowd to an evening to remember.

Backed by vociferous support, the host produced a clinical and commanding display to overwhelm top seed Hong Kong 3-0 and lift the Squash World Cup on Sunday. This is the first time in the history of the tournament that two Asian countries competed in the final.

The emphatic triumph marked India's finest showing in the competition, eclipsing its previous best — a bronze medal in 2023. Hong Kong, too, returned with its best-ever finish at the event, having placed eighth two years ago (2023).

Joshna Chinappa (world ranked 79) negotiated a few early hiccups to give India the perfect start, overcoming Ka Yi Lee ranked 42 places above Joshna 7-3, 2-7, 7-5, 7-1 in 23 minutes.

After cruising through the opening game, where her superior courtcraft spoke, Joshna was forced to dig deep as Lee lifted her intensity in the next two games, striking a series of exquisite winners from the backcourt.

After cruising through the opening game, where her superior courtcraft spoke, Joshna was forced to dig deep as Lee lifted her intensity in the next two games, striking a series of exquisite winners from the backcourt.

The veteran, however, showed why experience counts. Unfazed by the brief reversal, the 39-year-old held her nerve to clinch the tight third game 7-5 before shutting the door decisively in the fourth, denying Lee any chance of a comeback.

Abhay Singh, always a big-match performer and visibly charged up in national colours, then took centre stage. The 27-year-old delivered a ruthless display to sweep aside reigning Asian champion Alex Lau in straight games.

Anahat Singh completed the formalities in emphatic fashion, exuding confidence as she brushed aside the Asian champion Tomato Ho in just 16 minutes to seal the tie and confirm India's triumph. —*PTI*

BRITAIN PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, left, challenges for the ball with Brighton's Lewis Dunk during match between Liverpool and Brighton PHOTO: PTI

GREEN BLAMES MANAGER FOR IPL AUCTION

ADELAIDE, 14 DEC

Australia all-rounder Cameron Green on Sunday clarified that he will be available to bowl in the IPL, saying a "stuff-up" by his manager led to him being mistakenly registered as a batter for next week's mini auction.

However, he has since been cleared to bowl and has been rolling his arm in the ongoing Ashes series between Australia and England."I'll be good to bowl. —*PTI*

India overwhelmed Hong Kong to lift the Squash World Cup trophy, marking the country's finest showing in the competition PHOTO: PTI

Milan held to a draw

MILAN, 14 DEC

Teenage defender Davide Bartesaghi scored his first senior goals but couldn't prevent AC Milan from being held to a 2-2 draw at home to Sassuolo in Serie A on Sunday.

The result left Milan just a point ahead of Napoli, which was playing at Udinese later. Inter Milan can also move above its city rival if it wins at Genoa later. Sassuolo had only won one of its past three matches, but it took the lead at Siro in the 13th minute. Ismaël Koné, who forced his way into the area before lifting it over Mike Maignan. —*PTI*

Real Sociedad fires coach Sergio Francisco

MADRID, 14 DEC

Real Sociedad fired coach Sergio Francisco on Sunday, two days after the club's third straight loss in the Spanish league. Sociedad lost 2-1 to struggling Girona on Friday in a home match that it led through 75 minutes. It had also lost at Alaves and against Villarreal in its league games.

Girona hadn't won in four consecutive matches in all competitions, being eliminated by third-division club Ourense in the second round of the Copa del Rey earlier this month. Francisco leaves Sociedad in 15th place with 16 points from 16 matches, one point clear of the relegation zone.

The 46-year-old Francisco had taken over the helm from long-time Sociedad coach Imanol Alguacil in April. Sociedad has yet to announce Francisco's replacement.

Its next match is at Eldense in the Copa del Rey on Tuesday. It visits Levante in the Spanish league on Saturday. —*PTI*

17-TIME WORLD CHAMP

I had to reinvent my running: Shelly-Ann

PUNE, 14 DEC

Legendary Jamaican sprinter Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce says she hated being labelled "a great starter but not a great finisher," and had to reinvent her running style in her formative years to rise to the elite level.

Fraser-Pryce, an eight-time Olympic and 17-time World Championship medallist, said she put in a lot of effort in the 200m to sharpen her 100m sprint race in which she owns the third-fastest time in history at 10.60 seconds. "I had to really reinvent the way I ran, growing up in high school to becoming an elite sprinter because how I ran wasn't ideal, it wasn't going to make me win races," Fraser-Pryce, a brand ambassador of the Bajaj Pune Marathon, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

"People would say, 'man, she's a great starter but not a great finisher,' and I used to hate hearing those things, because I'm like, 'but I can finish too!'"

"I had to get stronger in the gym. I had to do more 200m if I wanted my 100m to be better. I really had to put myself out there, challenge myself more, and come out of my comfort zone." "I used to literally run and fall on my face. I had to learn and relearn how to stay upright, strike the ground, swing my arms, and go forward. For me, yes, people talk about your height and say 'oh you're too short,' but that wasn't something that I could control." Fraser-Pryce, whose list of achievements includes three Olympics and 10 World Championships gold medals.—*PTI*

Arsenal escapes Emirates with a freak 2-1 win against Wolves

LONDON, 14 DEC

Arsenal beat Wolverhampton 2–1 at the Emirates Stadium, opened a five-point gap at the top of the Premier League, and stayed there for another round, but the game was anything but simple.

Against the bottom team, still winless in the competition, Mikel Arteta's side struggled, failed to put a single shot on target in the first half, and needed two own goals from the opposition, one of them deep into stoppage time, to turn tension into relief.

It was a valuable win, less for the performance and more for the context, the kind that keeps a leader standing when the ball just refuses to cooperate.

Anyone expecting Arsenal to dominate from the opening whistle found a very different scenario.

The first half was slow, scrappy, and short on clear chances. Despite enjoying more possession and spending most of the time in the attacking half, the league leaders couldn't turn control into real danger. The most uncomfortable stat came at the break: zero shots on target in 45 minutes. —*PTI*